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GRATEFUL DEAD

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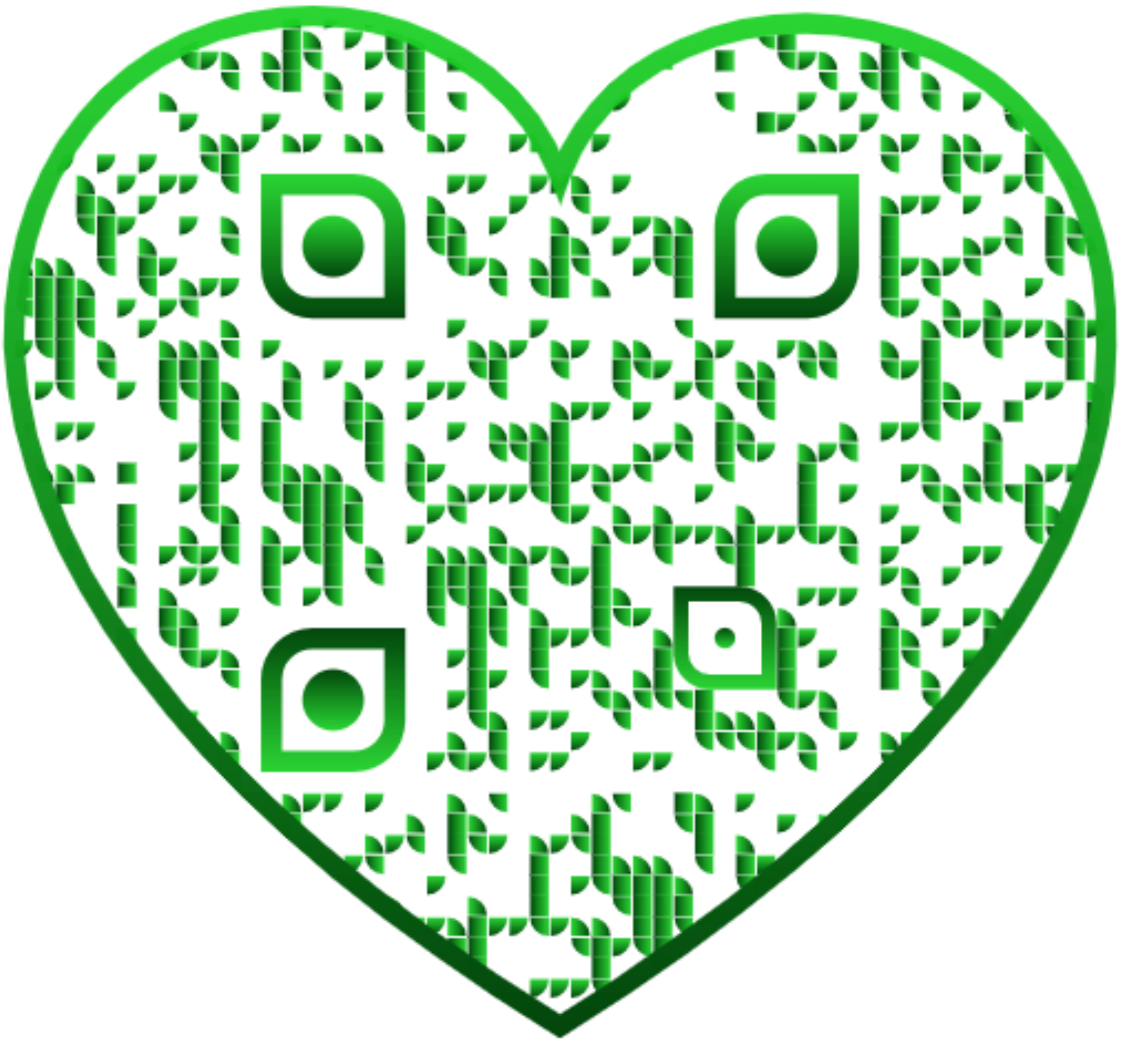

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"There was something calling us..."

BOB WEIR introduces our Ultimate Music Guide to the Grateful Dead

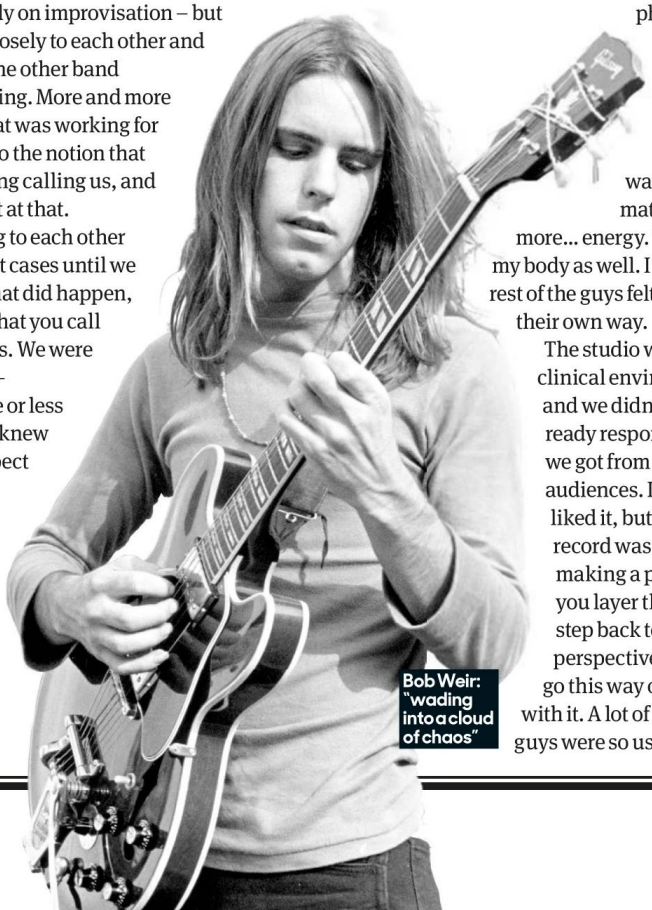
OUR whole approach dawned on us relatively slowly. At first we were just being a band working together – it was enjoyable work. But as time went on, we developed more facility with what we were doing: with our instruments and with our interactions, and maybe a third more intangible element.

It became apparent that we were up to something a little different than most musical ensembles were trying to achieve. We took a lot of direction early on from the John Coltrane Quartet and from Miles Davis, those kinds of outfits which relied heavily on improvisation – but also on listening closely to each other and working off what the other band members were saying. More and more as time went on that was working for us and that led us to the notion that there was something calling us, and I'm going to leave it at that.

We were listening to each other intently but in most cases until we broke loose, and that did happen, we were playing what you call head arrangements. We were playing the songs – everyone had more or less a defined part. We knew kind of what to expect of each other. The idea was to subtly – usually – embellish the part. I would try to embellish so it wasn't a complete departure, because what everyone else was going to play was contingent on me being there with my part, which they were expecting. I would try and nudge the part I was playing this way or that, and everyone else was pretty much practising that same approach.

It was way different from night to night. We learned to take our time wading into that cloud of chaos, knowing that we could find direction through it, individually and collectively if we were listening to each other and were doing our job. We did what we could on a given night, depending on what kind of shape we were in – there were innumerable contributing factors.

When it was going well I'd feel it somewhere between my heart and my throat – I'd breathe more freely. When we really hit that timeless place, which we did often enough, I could feel a physical feeling in my back. My spine became electric, it was no longer matter. It was more... energy. The rest of my body as well. I think the rest of the guys felt that in their own way.



Bob Weir: "wading into a cloud of chaos"

The studio was a clinical environment, and we didn't have the ready response that we got from our live audiences. I kind of liked it, but making a record was like making a painting: you layer things on, step back to get perspective and then go this way or that way with it. A lot of the other guys were so used to the energy of the crowd response would give them, the studio tried their patience.

In the studio we tried to approximate that but there's a tendency to go for something which amounts to what we'll call "perfection" for lack of a better description, mostly because there's no immediate gratification from seeing the crowd light up with what you're doing. And so you're looking for some sort of way of gauging what you're up to and all you have really is your own subjective considerations.

When high-quality portable recording devices hit the market and people started showing up at our shows with them, our record company told us "You've got to stop this, this is going to kill your record sales. You've got to shut these guys down." That was just something we couldn't do – it would put us in the position of being police at our own shows and that wasn't something we could wear very well. We backed up and said, "We can't do that." Jerry said: "Once we've played the notes, they belong to the people who came to listen." And at that point the record company threw up their hands because they weren't about to hire a bunch of enforcers to wander around the crowd and travel with us. I'm told it was the beginning of viral marketing. It worked out well for us, but we backed into it. It was the easiest and most natural thing to do.

If I listen back to recordings of those old shows I can tell pretty readily what I was feeling, and how gratifying and fulfilling it was at the time we were doing it. When I think about our music, I think about what has yet to be done with it – and where it wants to go.

Bobby Weir

August 2020

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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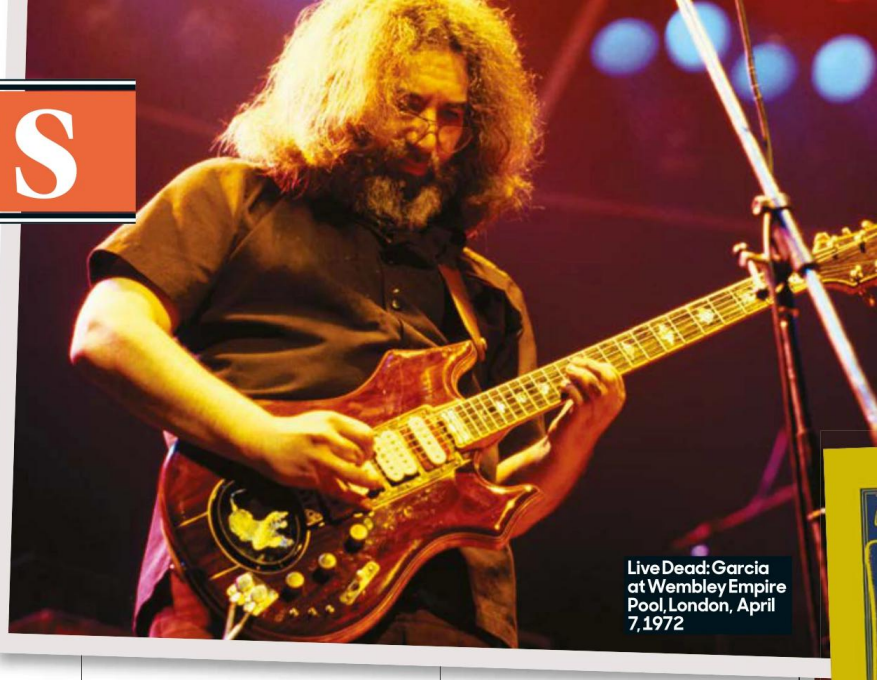
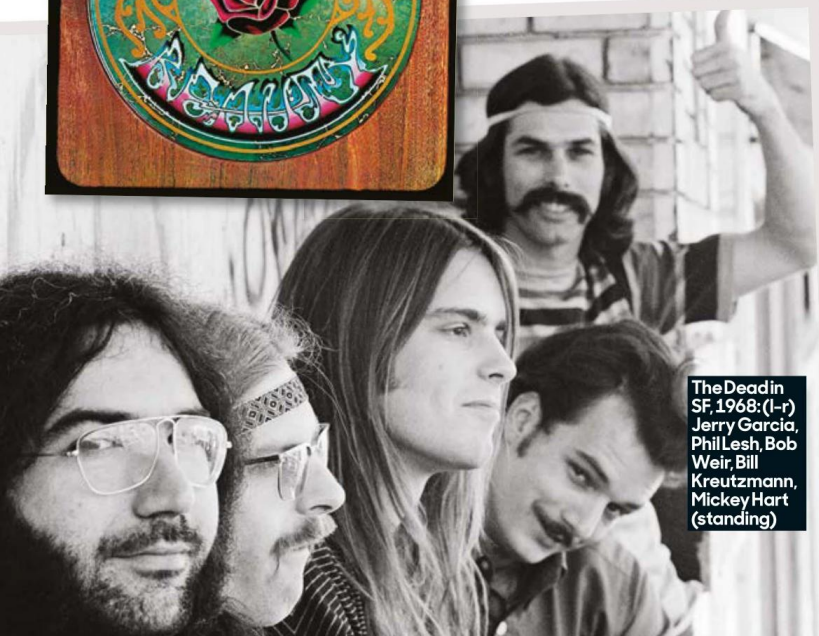

Live Dead: Garcia at Wembley Empire Pool, London, April 7, 1972


The Dead in SF, 1968: (l-r) Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, Mickey Hart (standing)

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The Grateful Dead, San Rafael, CA, July 1982: (l–r) Brent Mydland, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann, Bob Weir, Jerry Garcia and Mickey Hart

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"The Grateful Dead were part of the trip"

Before they made a record, a band of freewheeling San Francisco musicians got on the bus with KEN KESEY and his consciousness-expanding band of MERRY PRANKSTERS. Destination: Furthur. THE GRATEFUL DEAD "were on the same runaway train as we were," one participant tells Rob Hughes. "They had no idea whether it was going to crash or break into a new space any more than we did..."

UNCUT DECEMBER, 2015

THE Longshoremen's Hall near San Francisco's waterfront looks fairly ordinary from the outside. A compact building with a chunky roof, primarily built to load and unload shipping cargo, it's the kind of space that favours function over form. Appearances, however, can often be deceptive. Anyone peeking in one Saturday evening in January 1966, for instance, would have discovered an extraordinary spectacle.

Billed as "an orgy of colour and sound" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the three-day Trips Festival was at its height. Aside from live music by The Grateful Dead and Big Brother & The Holding Company, there are pulsing strobes, giant lightboxes, film projections, poetry, dancing and 'electric thunder sculptures'. Punters have been invited to wear "ecstatic dress". Thousands have poured through the doors from across the Bay Area, intrigued by the promise of an LSD experience without the LSD. This, it transpires, is nonsense. There's acid for anyone who wants it, disguised within huge tubs of ice cream. "Maybe this is the rock revolution," says the festival flyer.

The whole thing, spanning January 21-23, has been organised by The Merry Pranksters. A kinetic bunch of day-glo bohemians, formed around the totemic figure of Ken Kesey (author of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes A Great Notion*), their mission is to explore life outside of societal norms. And, it seems, to turn on the wider populace to the mind-expanding properties of psychedelic drugs. Official figures vary, but it's estimated that over 6,000 people turned up that weekend.

"That seemed like an enormous number," remembers Prankster Ed McClanahan. "The word 'hippie' didn't really have any currency at that time, until everybody suddenly saw everybody else and went: 'Oh! There's another one!' Who knew that there were 6,000 people who were all like that?"

The Trips Festival was just the latest in a string of public happenings, billed as 'Acid Tests' (LSD was still legal), undertaken by Kesey and the Pranksters. But it was by far the biggest and most successful. The general consensus, too, was that it represented some kind of breakthrough moment. Tom Wolfe, leading light of America's New Journalism movement, which favoured subjective reality over straight-on reportage, chronicled the Pranksters' exploits in 1968's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. In it, he pinpointed the ➤

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High achievers: revellers at the Acid Test Graduation at The Warehouse, on San Francisco's Harriet Street, October 31, 1966

Ken Kesey (centre) with the Merry Pranksters, October 31, 1966

Trips Festival as the start of the whole Haight-Ashbury era.

"It was already happening in pockets at the Acid Tests," offers Denise Kaufman, known in Prankster circles as Mary Microgram. "But the Trips Festival was probably the convergence of it all. There was definitely this desire for all of us to come together. The Grateful Dead played with what was going on in the room; it wasn't like everything was pre-set. Break down the barriers and distinctions – take the proscenium away – and nobody is the audience. We're all participants."

For Hugh Romney, a colourful Prankster who was later christened "Wavy Gravy" by BB King, LSD was integral to this communal shift in perception. "Everybody in America was still walking round in this Eisenhower mentality of khaki pants, white buck shoes, button-down collars and button-down brains," he recalls. "There was no magic or creativity. What the acid did was go in there and blow all that karmic cement apart. Suddenly people could see rainbows and colours and consciousness began to rise. It's beyond language once you break through to the other side. It's a highway to God."

TOM Wolfe always maintained that, in America at least, the '60s started when The Beatles arrived in New York for *The Ed Sullivan Show*. But it can be argued that another event, a journey that Kesey and his companions underwent four months later, in June 1964, was equally as pivotal.

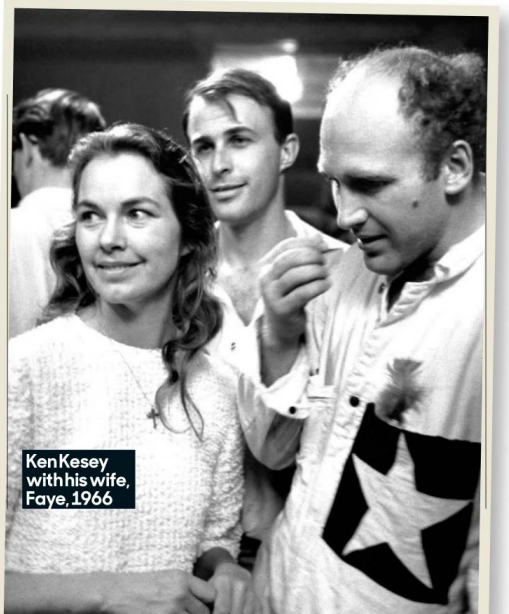
Kesey had an impressive back story. A former champion wrestler and football star at the University of Oregon, he'd graduated from its School of Journalism in 1957. Moving to California, he signed up to Stanford University's creative writing programme, where his social group included other authors like McClanahan, Larry McMurtry and Robert Stone.

Psychedelics turned him on in 1959, when he took part in a CIA-funded experiment at Menlo Park Veterans Hospital. Kesey was among a number of volunteers who were given various psychoactive drugs (LSD, psilocybin, mescaline and amphetamine IT-290) over a period of several weeks, all in the name of covert government research. The experience changed him forever. A short while afterwards he published the semi-hallucinogenic *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, written while working as a psychiatric aide on the night shift at Menlo Park. The novel's central theme – the individual's right to basic freedoms in the face of the all-controlling system – became a personal crusade in his life.

His natural charisma, allied to an agile mind and insatiable curiosity, quickly drew simpático people towards him. "Ken had grace, style, brains," opines Ken Babbs, Prankster and best friend from Stanford. "He was a magician, with magnetic blue eyes and a commanding use of language, full of outlandish adventures and yarns. The word 'showman' is very close to 'shaman'." Wavy Gravy calls him "a gigantic figure. Kesey was like Flash Gordon to Timothy Leary's Merlin."

Kesey used the profits from *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* to buy a rambling log house in La Honda, nestled in the Santa Cruz mountains, which became a base for his family and assorted Pranksters. The remainder was funnelled into a 1939 International Harvester school bus, which they swiftly customised into a travelling work of art: speakers on top, microphones inside and a hatch to allow people to ride on the roof. Its gaudy psychedelic paintwork included a preferred destination: "Furthur".

The Pranksters' plan in June '64 was a cross-country road trip, ostensibly to celebrate the publication of *Sometimes A Great Notion* and to visit the New York World's Fair. The real aim, however, was to see what would happen when this renegade group of acid heads barrelled their way across the USA, regaling the nation with their own improvised music, blasting out R&B or partaking in LSD experiments that were documented by masses of recording equipment. Running commentaries, tape loops and various broadcasts were a regular part of the trip. The whole escapade was recorded on 16mm film,



Ken Kesey with his wife, Faye, 1966

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Jerry Garcia at the intersection of Haight-Ashbury, October 1966

with the intention of making a Pranksters movie. Meanwhile, the bus would roll into towns throughout the States, offering to turn people on to acid. Certain phrases became enigmatic tenets of the Prankster ideal: "You're either on the bus or off the bus", "Nothing lasts"; "Never trust a Prankster". Fourteen people left from La Honda, including their designated driver, Neal Cassady.

The latter, something of a hero to everyone aboard, was the Pranksters' link to the Beat Generation before them. Cassady had been immortalised as Dean Moriarty, the epitome of the Beats' nomadic quest for enlightened thrills, in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*. He was also, memorably, Hart Kennedy in John Clellon Holmes' *Go* – generally accepted as the first Beat novel, the book even drew its title from his hyperactive nature.

"Neal Cassady was the fastest man alive," asserts Wavy Gravy, who often rode shotgun over the following year. "He would not just be driving the bus, but possibly rolling a joint, peeling an orange and having a conversation with some guy out of the window while talking to me. All at once. He had an amazing amount of knowledge that he was able to scoop up and toss to the four directions."

In New York, Cassady made a physical connection to the Beats by introducing the rest of the Pranksters to Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Kerouac, now a tired figure who seemed resigned to drinking his days away, was unmoved. Ginsberg was the opposite, embracing the Pranksters' sense of truth-seeking chaos and arranging for them to meet their pioneering counterparts on the East Coast, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert.

The encounter was a let-down. Leary wasn't at home when the bus roared into the drive of Millbrook, a vast gothic mansion that served as headquarters of the League For Spiritual Discovery, tossing smoke bombs and blaring out rock'n'roll. Instead, Alpert was the lone welcoming party. Leary eventually showed up, talked to his visitors for a few minutes, then retired to his room. "They'd come out of a research and academic background," explains Kaufman, "and I think there was a certain pomposity about it all. My sense of it was that Leary was more used to being the authority figure, which Kesey really wasn't. There was a much more communal sense to the Pranksters. It was just much more untamed."

> **"THERE WAS DEFINITELY THIS DESIRE FOR ALL OF US TO COME TOGETHER"**
> DENISE KAUFMAN

POST-TRIP, Kesey settled back in La Honda, though he quickly discovered that friends and acquaintances from all over California wanted to drop in and watch the footage the Pranksters had shot. There was a ridiculous amount of it – over 100 hours of film – and Kesey found that these home screenings were rapidly turning into events. "We were editing our bus movie at Kesey's place," says Ken Babbs, aka Intrepid Traveller, "and every Saturday night we would show the reel that we edited that week. Word got out and pretty soon the crowd was getting too big for the place to handle. So we rented halls and came up with the name, The Acid Test. And here's the theme: 'Can *You* Pass The Acid Test?' A double meaning was how you determined if rock was really gold. You put acid on it and if it shone, it was gold. Those who didn't shine weren't high."

The first Acid Test, in November 1965, was something of an ad hoc affair. Held at Babbs' place near Santa Cruz, the Pranksters' lack of marketing know-how meant that its sole promotional tool was a cardboard sign in a local bookstore. Allen Ginsberg showed up, along with the Pranksters (including Cassady) and a small gaggle of local bohos. "The Merry Band of Pranksters was actually a real band," Babbs recalls, "though we played instruments in a bizarre fashion. We called our music a form of non-verbal communication. We had the instruments set up in the living room, then went outside to commune with the moon and form an OM Circle [*a form of Orgasmic Meditation*]. We heard music coming from the house, went in and saw that The Warlocks were playing our instruments and singing through our microphones."

The Warlocks had been formed earlier that year by Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann and Ron "Pigpen" McKernan. They were soon to rename themselves the Grateful Dead. Central to the Acid Test experience, of course, was LSD, provided by Kesey's friend Owsley Stanley, known to all as "the LSD cook". As the Dead became the regular house band at the Tests, their relationship with Stanley flourished. Not only did he bring the chemicals, he also became their trusted soundman.

The first major Acid Test came on December 11, 1965. Muir Beach was the setting, a scenic stretch of coast in Marin Country, just north of San Francisco. The Pranksters commissioned some psychedelic poster art to promote the show, which listed the Grateful Dead, The Fugs and Allen Ginsberg among the "Happeners", alongside "Roy's Audio-Optics" and "huge, rumbly movies". Several hundred people turned up for the event, which also saw the Pranksters add a new element in the form of strobe lights. In many ways, Muir Beach signalled the start of multi-media entertainment, however freaky or bizarre. "Like all Prankster endeavours the Acid Tests were uniquely ours," offers Babbs. "We fell in the crack ➤

Bus trippers: Merry Pranksters including Stewart Brand and Anthony Dean Wells (painting) prepare the "Furthur" bus, October 1966

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between the Beat Generation and the Psychedelic Revolution and had our own originality and individuality."

Kesey's own view on what constituted an Acid Test was pretty nebulous. For him, there were no specific goals other than "just discovering what there was out there". As he explained to *The Paris Review* in 1994, seven years before his death, he was more interested in questions than solutions. "The job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery, plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom," he said. "The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer." He and the Pranksters were merely "divine losers" operating outside of straight society. And having a ball in the process.

"It was really important to realise that lively fun and humour is sometimes a lot more valuable for making people feel comfortable and drawing more people in," asserts Carolyn Garcia, better known in Prankster lore as Mountain Girl (and, later, as wife of Jerry Garcia). "We saw psychedelics as tools that creative people needed to have. I know they had events in Timothy Leary's group, but it was very intellectualised and I don't think they had much fun. That said, you've got to have a fairly strong mental constitution to enjoy the ride when taking psychedelics. You have to be sure that you're physically and mentally strong enough to avoid the swamps of the mind. My first trip took place out in the forest at Ken's place, wandering through gigantic trees. All these branches on the forest floor kept rearranging themselves into amazing and intricate patterns: mosaic floors and ancient designs. I also had auditory hallucinations, whereby I could hear Tibetan monks chanting in the caves of Tibet, even though I was high on LSD in California. All the hairs stood up on my head. I realised there were these strong currents of human activity running through the planet that you can tune into."

For Ed McClanahan, the true definition of psychedelia is "an extended ecstatic moment. There's just a sense of enormous well-being. It's like 1,000 watts higher than the feeling you get on Christmas morning as a kid. I'm not a religious person at all, but it's a premonition of what I think heaven could be."

TRUE to the Pranksters' pioneering spirit, there was only one place to go: higher. The Trips Festival was to be the culmination of their endeavours thus far. There was a problem though. Kesey had been charged with marijuana possession two days earlier, his second bust in a year. He and Mountain Girl had been sitting on the roof of Prankster Stewart Brand's house, talking about the festival and smoking grass, when a neighbour called the cops. Kesey was released on bail, with the proviso that he wasn't allowed to hang out with the Pranksters any more.

It was too late for all that. He and the Pranksters, particularly Brand and Bay Area artist Ramon Sender, had invested too much time organising and promoting the event, cranking the "Furthur" bus around San Francisco to spread the word. Kesey defied the authorities by dressing up in a spacesuit and hiding out on a balcony at the Trips Festival, armed with a microphone and projector. Babbs was directly beneath him in the centre of the hall, directing operations from an enormous scaffolding tower, stuffed with electronic paraphernalia. The cops were in force too, sent by their department bosses to monitor an event that had been carefully advertised as a "non-drug re-creation of a psychedelic experience".

> **"JERRY GARCIA'S MIND WAS CRACKED OPEN, LIKE KEN KESEY'S"**
> ED McCLANAHAN

The Longshoremen's Hall was a writhing mass of bodies, dancing wildly under strobe and ultraviolet lights, tripping on acid. The room itself was a riot of streamers and balloons and fluorescent paint, with films, sound machines, the Dead and a running commentary echoing through the speakers, courtesy of Babbs, Mountain Girl, Cassady, Wavy Gravy and the clandestine Kesey. "The three floors of the building were all open to each other," recalls Carolyn Garcia, "so Ken was writing funny lines of prose on this overhead projector and putting them onto the ceiling in huge, four-foot letters. They were little twisted statements about religion and politics and philosophy, all rolled into one. Things like: 'Is God a doughnut?' It was a case of trying to keep people entertained by having a continuous stream of event-going: talking, singing, music-playing and so on. Dancing stuck out as something that people immediately needed to do, because of the heightened physical energy that one gets in a psychedelic state."

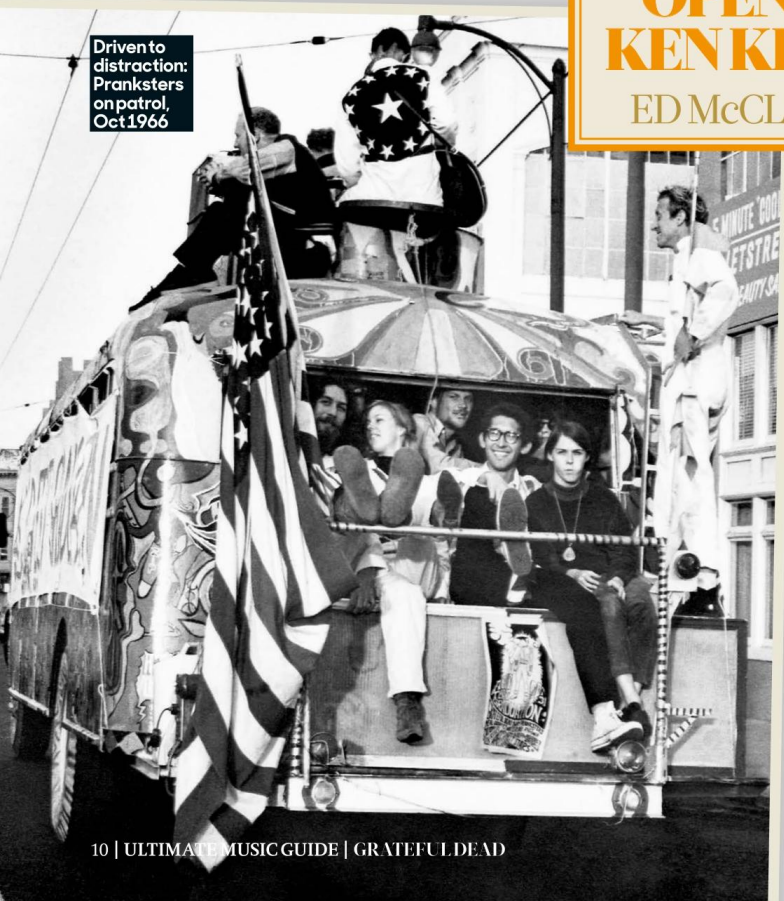
Concurs Babbs: "We had no motives other than making a movie, doing music, elevating the spirit and sharing our experience with others. This was what the Trips Festival was about, a place for all the people in the Bay Area, those who were exploring new ways of expressing themselves, to come together in one weekend and strut their stuff. Freak freely, as the expression went."

It's also important not to underestimate the Grateful Dead's role in the Tests. The surviving Pranksters stress that they didn't merely provide background music. "They created the Acid Tests to as much of an extent as Ken did," insists McClanahan. "But they were *of* it too, if that makes sense. Jerry Garcia's mind was cracked open. He just picked things up and retained things. He and Kesey were very much alike in that sense. They both seemed to have a very high level of intelligence and intuition."

Prankster Lee Quarnstrom remembers that the Dead "were on the same runaway train as we were. They had no idea whether it was going to crash or break into a new space any more than we did. They were right there as part of the trip. The Grateful Dead weren't interested in getting rich. They didn't seem to have the 'I'm-a-rock-star' egos that drove a lot of musicians."

Nevertheless, getting rich was a natural consequence of the Trips Festival. Co-ordinator and promoter Bill Graham was pleasantly surprised that the weekend grossed over $12,000, with almost no overheads. What's more, there was generous coverage of the event in *Newsweek*, *Time* and *Life*. Within weeks, Graham was hosting regular happenings of his own at the Fillmore, with bands like Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Big Brother & The Holding Company augmented by psychedelic light shows and projections. "It's where Bill Graham figured, 'By God, there's money in rock'n'roll!'" quips Wavy Gravy.

Merry Prankster Hugh Romney, aka Wavy Gravy



Driven to distraction: Pranksters on patrol, Oct 1966

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Acid Test Graduation in San Francisco, October 31, 1966

WITH Kesey now a fugitive, eventually ending up in Mexico, Babbs took over and organised a series of Acid Tests in Los Angeles. None of them quite captured the same sensory thrills as the Trips Festival, except, maybe, for the Watts Test of February '66. Held less than six months after the infamous Watts Riots, there was no politically motivated rationale behind the idea. Rather, as Carolyn Garcia points out, the Pranksters were now feeling "the hot breath of security on us". Nobody would be looking for the Pranksters in Watts.

Says Wavy Gravy: "It was the eve of when LSD became illegal, just after the riots, with the buildings still smouldering. Huge amounts of people come pouring in. We had these two galvanised trashcans and I get on the microphone: 'OK everybody, pay really close attention now. The Kool-Aid on the right is for the kids, the Kool-Aid on the left is the *electric* Kool-Aid.' I went over it about 15 times, but sooner or later the whole place started melting down. Owsley had set up this magnificent sound system and Paul Foster, another amazing Prankster, had painted his face blue on the right side and silver on the left."

"It was mostly neighbourhood people who came, and most of them had never taken LSD before," Quarnstrom recalls. "It was a good mix of wacko crazy white people and interested local South LA residents, all wondering what was going to happen next. Everybody was really dosed, really high. And the people of South LA seemed just as happy and goofy as we and the Grateful Dead were."

The last Californian event came at the end of October '66, when a special "Acid Test Graduation" was held at Winterland in San Francisco. And although there was to be one more – organised by Kesey's old friend Larry McMurtry in Houston the following spring – the happenings were effectively over. "We quit doing the Acid Tests the night LSD became illegal," says Babbs, "and drove the bus to Mexico to hook up with Kesey, who was still on the run." The core Pranksters remained there for six months.

IT'S possible to trace the legacy of the Pranksters through certain key aspects of Western pop culture. The Acid Test format – mixed-media shows with music, film and trippy light effects – was appropriated wholesale at Bill Graham's two Fillmore venues, in San Francisco and New York, in the late '60s. From there it fanned outwards, while the Grateful Dead went on to become America's leading exponents of psychedelic rock. There were even sharp echoes of the Tests in the emergence of the late '80s British rave scene.

Above all, perhaps, it offered a tantalising glimpse into the possibility of a more tolerant, harmonious future. With or without the drugs. Says Quarnstrom: "I think that everybody in the LSD scene in the Bay Area thought: 'Man, if everybody did this, what a wonderful world it would be. We could all have peace and brotherhood and we could end war and racism and so on.' But it became clear that there's the same percentage of assholes who take LSD as there is in the normal population. So Richard Nixon wasn't going to paint his face, smoke pot and start wearing psychedelic clothes."

Denise Kaufman maintains that the Acid Tests "were a bowl for people to hopefully safely explore a sense of inter-connectivity. It wasn't an individual acid trip in that way, it was a much larger endeavour. I think the '60s get mis-characterised a lot and those of us who have a love and appreciation of what it was really about want to set it straight. We found there were ways to awaken our humanity and move things forward. I think that's something that came out of the Pranksters and reached into the culture in so many ways. There was a real exploration of consciousness going on. It wasn't 'Let's get high and party!' There's a lot of superficial reviewing of those years without an understanding of the era."

For Ken Babbs, the Pranksters merely rode the psychedelic wave. "We were fortunate to be on the first crest and surfed the curl along with many others," he posits. "And the wave kept going. Now it's all over the world. Who needs drugs? When someone asked Kesey if he still took LSD, he said: 'Don't have to. We're like Pavlov's dogs. All you have to do is bang on the side of the bus and we begin to hallucinate.'"

Dynamic duo Ken Babbs, also known as the Intrepid Traveller, and Gretchen Fetchin, the Slime Queen

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GRATEFUL DEAD

GRATEFUL DEAD

RELEASED MARCH 17, 1967

Dawn of the Dead. The divergence between the band live and in the studio begins as "Captain Trips" and company decamp to LA for a brisk garage/blues debut. *BY* JOHN ROBINSON

WITH the Grateful Dead, we often speak warmly of a "long strange trip". We might be talking about the 30 eventful years of the group's life between their inception and the early death of their leader, Jerry Garcia, in 1995. Equally, we may have in mind the transformative nature of the band's music – the way they could play a song from an album and take it on a journey through improvisational space live. Around the beginning of 1967, though, we would have been talking about traversing a more uncomfortable distance: between the aspirations of the players and the hard evidence of their recordings.

A band who from the start of their career made tapes of their live shows in order to help them signpost more exciting possibilities for their playing, the Grateful Dead had possibly set themselves up to be disappointed by something as finite as a debut studio album. Theirs is a vibrant and spirited garage-rock record. Vox organ wailing in front of them, the band, like many others in the same position in 1964–1969, charge through their live set: some covers and a couple of original compositions. If we hear it and think it doesn't sound how we thought a Grateful Dead album might sound, imagine what the Grateful Dead must have thought. A record company flyer called it "admittedly psychedelic". Bass player Phil Lesh called it "a turd".

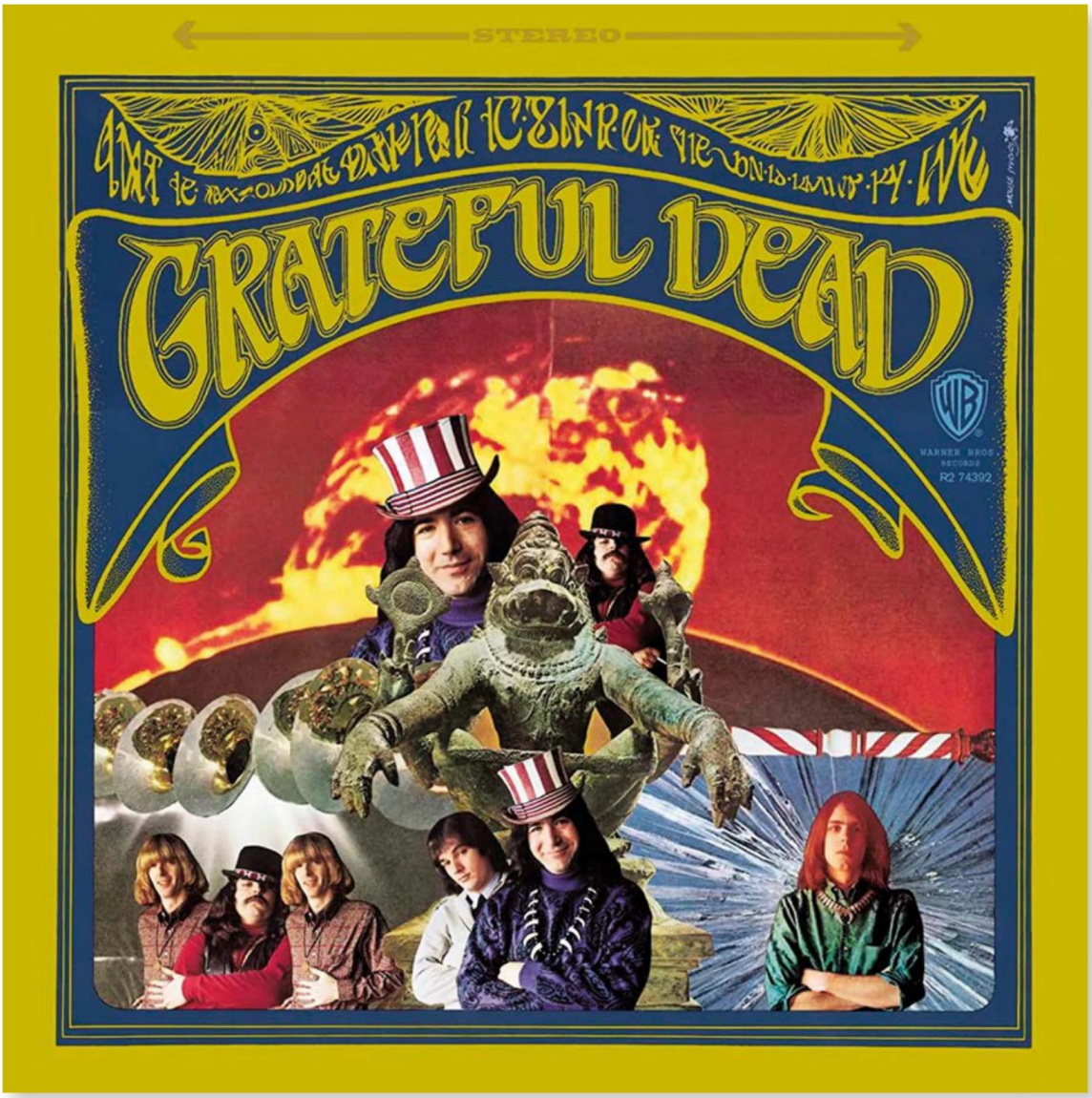
With 53 years of hindsight, we can imagine why the band might have hoped for something more. By January of 1967, when they travelled to Los Angeles to spend four days recording, the Grateful Dead were already youthful veterans of some very weird scenes; part of something in which the creation of wild rock music was a means, but not solely an end. A former jug band based around three key players (guitarists Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir; organist/frontman Ron "Pigpen" McKernan), the group adopted electricity and played 10 shows as The Warlocks. Their residency at Magoo's Pizza in Palo Alto coincided with the addition of a rhythm section (drummer Bill Kreutzmann and bassist Phil Lesh), and a new name: the Grateful Dead.

At least as important to the band as finding each other was their finding a benefactor, soundman and LSD chemist in Owsley "Bear" Stanley. Stanley's background was patrician, but his esoteric interests and freewheeling connections placed the band at the heart of a blooming moment for expanded consciousness. By the time of the "Human Be-In", the gathering in Golden Gate Park at the start of 1967, the Dead were long embedded in the wagon train of mischief captained by Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, as the chief musical element of their evangelising "acid tests". They had travelled widely, living eventfully in Los Angeles and communally at the semi-rural Rancho Olompali in Novato, California. In 1966 they had even made a debut single ("Stealin'"/"Don't Ease Me In"), a Dylanesque blues. A badge worn around their Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood spoke to their experience: "Good old Grateful Dead".

Somewhere in this confusion – the blinding insights and relativities of LSD, the many hours in spaces populated by adventurous people – the evolutionary processes of Grateful Dead music were hatched. No wonder Phil Lesh and others felt something was missing from these first recordings, and would try and steer things a different direction thereafter. In their

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Grateful Dead... are distinguished by one of the most boring lead guitarists ever to inflict his presence on a group. The group are also distinguished by one of the most boring organists ever to inflict his presence on a group. For proof, listen to 'Viola Lee Blues', the extended track on this album, which contains remarkably tedious solos by all concerned... Some of the numbers are quite nice, like 'The Golden Road' and 'Beat It [On] Down The Line', but mostly it's an ace drag, unless you happen to be stoned in your favourite club."
CHRIS WELCH, MELODY MAKER, JULY 29, 1967



TRACKMARKS

1. The Golden Road (To Unlimited Devotion) ★★★★★
2. Beat It On Down The Line ★★★★
3. Good Morning, Little Schoolgirl ★
4. Cold Rain And Snow ★★★★
5. Sitting On Top Of The World ★★★★
6. Cream Puff War ★★★★
7. Morning Dew ★★★★
8. New, New Minglewood Blues ★★★
9. Viola Lee Blues ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Dave Hassinger
Recorded at: RCA studios, Los Angeles
Personnel includes: Jerry "Captain Trips" Garcia (guitar), Bob Weir (guitar), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (organ), Phil Lesh (bass), Bill Kreutzmann (drums)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 73

own context they were reagents in a social-chemical experiment. In the studio they were simply musicians.

While their entourage moved into picturesque lodgings, the band met at RCA Studios in Los Angeles, with Dave Hassinger, who had produced "Satisfaction" for The Rolling Stones. Wired on the Dexamyl diet pills supplied by Garcia's partner, Carolyn "Mountain Girl" Adams, for the next four days the Grateful Dead recorded something like their repertoire. Tough as it might have been to suggest anything like the sensory derangement of their usual playing environment, there are songs on the album that hint that this is a group that will be able to handle itself on a long excursion through tricky terrain.

In the last third of the album, Bonnie Dobson's war drama "Morning Dew" (5:09) offers something of the poise, potential and glorious tone that will carry the song into *Europe '72* (10:35) and all the way to the end of the group's life. "Viola Lee Blues", meanwhile, which closes the album on a rowdy jam after a solid 10 minutes of bluesy groove, seems to have been designated as the permitted occasion to cut loose, the band far from the experts in smooth transition they will become and more like the young Pink Floyd: reaching for something and landing in abstraction.

The blues "Good Morning, Little Schoolgirl" was a big number for Pigpen, then the group's most accomplished frontman, and it's easy to see how it may have gone over well live – as unacceptable as a song about grooming should be to modern ears, or any ears. As one of the songs that was edited to help the band's set fit onto the album it does, however, illustrate the problems of form the young Dead were facing. While *The Doors*, of January 1967, works like a short story – dark, graceful, implying more beyond the limits of the work – *The Grateful Dead* can at times sound foreshortened, cut like an overwritten newspaper article, from the bottom up.

GARCIA'S "CREAM PUFF WAR" IS A TUMBLING COUSIN TO "HEY JOE"

Many songs are brief and to the point. Noah Lewis's "New, New Minglewood Blues" becomes a Dylanesque profusion, sounding a bit like Captain Beefheart's "Sure 'Nuff 'N Yes I Do". Garcia's composition "Cream Puff War" is a tumbling cousin to "Hey Joe" – never too far from any young band's mind in 1967. Tempo wobbles and playing errors are occasionally referenced by the band and its listeners when seeking to resolve their mixed feelings about the album, but the speed of the playing on the debut (check particularly "Sitting On Top Of The World", "Cold Rain And Snow" and "Beat It On Down The Line") speaks as much to the power of the band's youthful enthusiasm as it does to Mountain Girl's diet pills.

We will later applaud the Grateful Dead's smooth and searching transitions, the band's sensitivity and the direction of its playing. Listen a little harder, and you'll find this is still taking place between Garcia, Weir and Pigpen's Vox organ – it is just doing so very fast indeed. The exchange never sounds more joyful than on the first track on the album, "The Golden Road", in which layered backing vocals jostle for space within the band's hectic evocation of their barefoot scene.

It is telling that "Golden Road", though it appears first, was in fact the song recorded last, back in San Francisco after the LA sessions. It underlines one of the band's tacit positions from this point on. Even when something appears to be finished, it's worth remembering it's still only a work in progress. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

ANTHEM OF THE SUN

RELEASED JULY 18, 1968

The Dead become untethered studio scientists, aiming to move humanity on. In so doing they pluck a classic of live hybrids and kaleidoscopic weirdness out of thick air. *BY* PAUL MOODY

BY September of 1967, the Summer Of Love was fast turning into the autumn of discontent. A *Time* magazine article dated July 7 described hippies as, among other things, "dangerously deluded dropouts", while a CBS News feature broadcast on August 22 entitled "The Hippie Temptation" – featuring the Dead's first-ever TV appearance – found various representatives of the straight world (law enforcement officers, doctors, psychiatrists) condemning a movement which, as Jerry Garcia patiently explained, was intent only on "moving the whole human race ahead a step".

A drug bust on the band's crash-pad at 710 Ashbury Street on October 2, meanwhile, saw 10 members of the Dead family, including band members Bob Weir and Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, charged with marijuana possession.

Compounding these problems was the fact that, despite being the de facto leaders of the Bay Area scene, the Grateful Dead's own (dark) star was on the wane. Having seen their inoffensive debut eclipsed by the full-blown psychedelia of their rivals, notably the Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow* and Country Joe & The Fish's *Electric Music For The Mind And Body*, the band – enhanced by newly recruited second percussionist Mickey Hart – vowed to make a very different follow-up. One which made full use of a record deal with Warner Bros which afforded them the unheard-of luxury of unlimited studio time.

To this end, the band relocated to American Studios in Los Angeles in November 1967 with producer Dave Hassinger.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"Always one of the top West Coast bred groups, this latest set shows how they have matured into a thinking man's pop group. Good songs, cleverly programmed, beautifully arranged for a way-above-average LP."
MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 5, 1968

An engineer loved by the Stones and the Jefferson Airplane, and familiar to the band from their own debut, the affable 40-year-old seemed to be a natural fit. However, the band's avant-garde approach – as well as their prodigious drug intake – quickly proved an obstacle to getting anything done. After three months in the studio with no finished songs or obvious direction, the breaking point for an exasperated Hassinger came at Century Sound in New York, when Weir asked the producer to create the illusion of "thick air" by mixing recordings of silence taken in the desert and the city.

"They were so undisciplined," recalled Warner Bros executive Joe Smith. "These guys were stoned part of the time, living in a fantasy world and looking for sounds that may not even be possible."

Regrouping at San Francisco's Coast Recorders with trusted soundman Dan Healy in March 1968, the Dead decided to throw caution to the wind, using their creative freedom, as Mickey Hart later put it, as a "springboard into weirdness". Recruiting old friend Tom Constanten to add electronic tape manipulation techniques inspired by avant-garde composers Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage, Garcia and Lesh – assisted by the tireless Healy – set to work. Weaving together studio recordings and excerpts from 18 different live performances recorded between September 1967 and March 1968, they created a kaleidoscopic sonic collage, using jump cuts, cross-fades and a smorgasbord of exotic instrumentation (kazoos, harpsichord, crotales, timpani, guiro) to maintain the flow.

TRACKMARKS

1. That's It For The Other One ★★★★
2. New Potato Caboose ★★★
3. Born Cross-Eyed ★★★
4. Alligator ★★★★
5. Caution ★★★

Label: Warner Bros/ Seven Arts/Rhino
Producer: Grateful Dead, David Hassinger
Recorded: RCA Victor, LA; American Recording Company, LA; Century Sound Studio, NYC; Olmstead Sound Studios, NYC; various live locations
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (lead guitar, acoustic guitar, kazoo, vibraslap, vocals), Mickey Hart (drums, orchestra bells, gong, chimes, crotales, prepared piano, finger cymbals), Bill Kreutzmann (drums, glockenspiel, gong, chimes, crotales, prepared piano, finger cymbals), Phil Lesh (bass guitar, trumpet, harpsichord, kazoo, piano, timpani, vocals), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (Hammond organ, celesta, claves, vocals), Bob Weir (rhythm guitar, 12-string guitar, acoustic guitar, kazoo, vocals), Tom Constanten (prepared piano, piano, electronic tape)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 87

"Jerry and Phil were like mad scientists," recalled Bill Kreutzmann. "They started splicing all the versions together, creating hybrids that contained the studio tracks and various live parts, stitched together from different shows."

The sense of pop's rule book being ripped apart page by page begins with breathtaking opener "That's It For The Other One". An intricately constructed seven-minute song suite incorporating elements from a Valentine's Day 1968 performance in San Francisco and shows in Lake Tahoe and LA, it moves from the baroque pop of "Cryptical Envelopment", with its haunting refrain of "*You know he had to die*", into a brief instrumental segment ("Quadlibet For Tenderfeet"), before exploding into life with "The Faster We Go, The Rounder We Get". A propulsive eulogy to Beat Generation icon Neal Cassady sung by Bob Weir ("*There was cowboy Neal/At the wheel of a bus to never-ever land*"), it shifts back into a live fragment of "Cryptical Envelopment" before final section "We Leave The Castle" sees it disintegrate in a barrage of bleeps and dissonant sound effects pre-dating The Beatles' "Revolution 9".

Opening with a Byrdsy jangle of guitars, an eight-minute "New Potato Caboose", written by bassist Phil Lesh with lyrics from a poem by Bobby Petersen, provides a dazzling glimpse of the Dead's jam-band future, before Bob Weir's blistering "Born Cross-Eyed" brings the first side to a close, complete with time changes, celestial harmonies, mariachi trumpets and a final Who-like power chord.

GARCIA CLAIMED HE HAD MIXED IT "FOR THE HALLUCIN-ATIONS"

It's followed by the album's centrepiece, "Alligator". A hypnotic 11-plus minutes featuring the Dead's first lyrical contribution from Robert Hunter, it builds from a jaunty kazoo intro into a breakdown section where Weir implores, "*C'mon everybody, get up and dance*", before building into a locomotive swamp boogie, Garcia's otherworldly soloing acting as a counterpoint to a lyric riffing on the theme of cultural appropriation – "alligator" was a derogatory word used by New Orleans musicians to describe white musicians who they felt had stolen their music.

Dating back to their days in The Warlocks, a final "Caution (Do Not Stop On Tracks)" provides *Anthem Of The Sun* with a suitably esoteric coda, the band stretching out over a nine-minute fuzz-blues epic based on Them's "Mystic Eyes", before a feedback-drenched finale where Garcia summons up an electric firestorm.

Despite a none-more-psychedelic sleeve by artist Bill Walker depicting the band members within a Buddhist-style mandala, *Anthem...* nonetheless failed to provide the Dead with the commercial breakthrough they craved. Hampered by murky production – in true hippie style, Garcia claimed he had mixed it "for the hallucinations" – it only reached 87 in the US charts. No matter. The straight world could scoff, but this mesmerising sonic tapestry had proved the Dead to be the most fearless and imaginative band in American rock. In musical terms, at least – Garcia had achieved his aim of shifting the human race one step on. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

AOXOMOXOA

RELEASED JUNE 20, 1969

Widely misunderstood, and truly out there. The costly and drug-addled third studio album obliquely points a way ahead. *BY* JASON ANDERSON

LIKE so many periods in the Grateful Dead's saga, the last months of 1968 and first months of 1969 were wildly creative, wildly unpredictable and not a little frustrating. The struggle to weather a storm of drugs, indulgence and extravagance would yield their first full-fledged psychedelic-era masterpiece, a work whose astonishing scope, fluidity and power helped forge a formidable reputation for the band that sustained them through many decades to come. In many respects, it's the document in which the Dead become the Dead, especially in the minds of listeners who never had the opportunity to experience them in full flight at the Fillmore.

Unfortunately for the increasingly frustrated Warner Bros, this landmark recording was their first double-live set *Live/Dead*, not *Aoxomoxoa*, the album that cost the band and their label nearly $200,000 and eight months of studio time. Though Garcia considered the two 1969 releases to be an intimately connected yin-and-yang, the band's most experimental and expensive effort never inspired much affection among the Dead faithful or personnel, especially when compared to its more exhilarating companion work. Engineer Bob Matthews later lamented the laborious process that left the songs feeling joyless while Bob Weir called *Aoxomoxoa* "over-produced and over-arranged". Surely such a dazzling cover by Rick Griffin – who also concocted the album's palindromic nonsense title – ought to accompany better-loved contents.

Yet the triumph of *Live/Dead* could not have existed without its runty counterpart. In fact, the idea of recording a live album was conceived to address the debts that mounted as the band explored new possibilities with the Ampex 16-track recorder that became their pride and joy after they acquired it in 1968 and ditched the eight-track versions of the songs they'd already recorded. This miracle of technology was a double-edged sword for the band. Once the notoriously heavy Ampex had been lugged up the stairs of the Avalon Ballroom to record *Live/Dead*, it allowed for the richer, more detailed sound that set the standard for innumerable Dead bootlegs. But whenever this mechanical beast returned to the band's chosen studios in San Mateo and San Francisco, those eight extra tracks made it nearly impossible for them to escape the labyrinth of recording, mixing and tinkering. The challenge of making *Aoxomoxoa* was compounded by the musicians' fondness for enlivening those costly studio hours with the super-charged LSD known as STP. Garcia later admitted that their drug intake made the sessions "a little weird – in fact, very weird". In a 1978 interview with Dead biographer Blair Jackson, Garcia had this advice for anyone who couldn't make sense of "What's Become Of The Baby", the eight-and-a-half-minute stream of gobbledygook that occupied much of Side Two: "Get a tank of nitrous oxide."

The band acknowledged the original mixing job on *Aoxomoxoa* was one casualty of this methodology. Only two years after its release, Garcia and Phil Lesh did an extensive remix, removing some of the wonkiest elements as well as a few of the most wondrous, like the celestial choir that originally accompanied Garcia's warbling on "Mountains Of The Moon" and the endearingly mad jumble of overlapping guitar and keyboard lines in "China Cat Sunflower". After this overhaul, the 1969 mix was essentially out of circulation until Rhino's LP boxset in 2010. Then in 2019, the 50th-anniversary expanded reissue presented the two versions together for the first time.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The Dead would appear to owe most of their popularity to the mystique which has surrounded them since the early days of the San Francisco acid scene. They're far from being an outstanding band in any sense, although Jerry Garcia is a fairly inventire guitarist and Pigpen is... well... Pigpen. Bob Weir joins Garcia in a nice guitar duet on 'China Cat Sunflower', but there's not a great deal to recommend this to the average listener."
MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 18, 1969

TRACKMARKS

1. St Stephen ★★★★
2. Dupree's Diamond Blues ★★★
3. Rosemary ★★★★
4. Doin' That Rag ★★★
5. Mountains Of The Moon ★★★
6. China Cat Sunflower ★★★★
7. What's Become Of The Baby ★★
8. Cosmic Charlie ★★

Label: Warner Bros, Seven Arts
Produced by: Grateful Dead
Recorded at: Pacific Recording, San Mateo; Pacific High Recording, San Francisco.
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals, lead vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals, co-lead vocals on "St Stephen"), Phil Lesh (bass guitar, vocals), Ron "Pigpen"' McKernan (percussion), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion), Bill Kreutzmann (drums, percussion), Tom Constanten (keyboards) "The Supporting Musicians": John "Marmaduke" Dawson, David Nelson, Peter Grant, Wendy, Debbie, Mouse
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 73

The question of which incarnation of *Aoxomoxoa* ought to be regarded as the more accurate representation of the Dead's acid-addled creative vision adds yet another level of murk to a work that was always clear as mud. Nevertheless, the differences highlight the quirks that make it such a singular and often fascinating work, as well as a worthier companion piece to the band's first masterpiece than most Deadheads (and Dead members) may ever concede.

As the first album to consist entirely of songs co-written by Robert Hunter, it's also a testament to the giddy playfulness his lyrics brought to the Dead's music and the stylistic detours his words sometimes encouraged. The adventurousness here is far beyond the flirtations with the ideas of Cage and Coltrane on *Anthem Of The Sun*. On the opener, "St Stephen" – one of the few songs here that appeared with any frequency in set lists, often as a component of "Dark Star" – Garcia and Lesh's music for Hunter's cheeky take on the martyred saint skitters between amiable boogie, jazzy double-lead-guitar liquidity and eerie English balladry. In "Dupree's Diamond Blues", Hunter's tale of a thief driven mad by his lust for "*jelly roll*" rides an enjoyably slapdash amalgam of country, blues and ragtime. In the most extreme example of the band's eagerness to serve their new lyricist, "Mountains Of The Moon" pairs Hunter's pastoral and medieval imagery with a plaintive setting built around the harpsichord played by Tom Constanten, the keyboardist who replaced Ron "Pigpen" McKernan before his departure in 1970.

Constanten's later involvement with the Incredible String Band is not so surprising given *Aoxomoxoa*'s lean toward the anachronistic folk trappings of *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*.

> **WEIR CALLED IT "OVER-PRODUCED AND OVER-ARRANGED"**

Elsewhere, the emphasis on acoustic instrumentation and air of prettiness suggests the influence of baroque-pop hits like The Rolling Stones' "Lady Jane" and the Left Banke's "Pretty Ballerina". Even with Garcia's electronically distorted vocal buried as deep as it is in the 1969 mix, "Rosemary" could be the strangest and loveliest song the band ever made. While the Dead were never exactly known for their delicacy, that quality is surprising for its abundance here. That's just as well given how poorly the bluesy "Cosmic Charlie" and any other heavier moments are served by the woeful lack of low end in both mixes. It's as if Lesh and Mickey Hart decided to stay on the studio sofa in order to enjoy those STP trips.

The clattering that occasionally accompanies Garcia's tremulous vocals and the electronic squalls and oscillations in "What's Become Of The Baby" suggest that Bill Kreutzmann and Pigpen were busier in their percussionist duties, but not by much. *Aoxomoxoa* at its most formless, the longest track indicates how enervating the Dead's inaugural foray into 16-track recording had become. It's telling that *Workingman's Dead* was recorded and mixed in nine days and came in well under budget – they had no intention of sinking into the quagmire again.

Yet as prudent as the Dead were about avoiding this kind of wastefulness, there's something sad about the fact that none of their subsequent studio albums were ever so weird or ambitious. Instead, the success of *Live/Dead* and the sparer, more sensible-minded studio albums that followed at the beginning of the '70s put them on another path. In his later years, Garcia famously grumbled about the Dead's dichotomous situation as a band that was revered for its concert performances yet somehow only made "shitty records". Imagine how things may have been if *Aoxomoxoa*'s road of excess had led them somewhere other than it did. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

LIVE/ DEAD

RELEASED NOVEMBER 10, 1969

Released from studio restraints, the Dead expand their sonic language on a transcendent live double.

BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

THERE were two compelling motives for the Dead to record a live album after a trio of studio LPs that had shifted few copies outside Haight-Ashbury. The first impetus was that they owed Warner Brothers $180,000 (getting on for $2m in today's money) for the studio costs of making *Aoxomoxoa*. A live set was a convenient way to extricate themselves from the debt.

The second, more elevated reason was that in the studio the Dead had only been able, as Phil Lesh put it, to "paraphrase" what they did on stage. It was why live sections had been stitched into the hybrid studio album *Anthem Of The Sun*. Now it was time for a full-on concert album that captured the unique freewheeling nature of the Dead live and the fire-breathing improvisations that, after so many epic all-night jams at the Acid Tests and in San Francisco's psychedelic ballrooms, were scaling stratospheric peaks.

What's more, the Dead now had the technology to capture the cosmic alchemy with a 16-track portable Ampex machine and a revolutionary "mic splitter", which sent one channel of sound from each microphone into the PA and a second channel into the recording setup without any loss of sound quality.

At the time the band's live set centred around a kinetic sequence of "Dark Star", "St Stephen" and "The Eleven", which defined their musical identity and marked a profound point in their evolution. The pieces offered space for the wildest experimentation and improvisation while thematically constituting "one serious, long composition", as Jerry Garcia put it. After this marathon journey to explore the furthest reaches of the sonic universe, the mothership would then return to earth for Pigpen's showcase on an acid-fried R&B workout of Bobby "Blue" Bland's "Turn On Your Love Light".

When the band's crew dragged their shiny new recording machine up the steps of San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom for a three-night stint in January 1969, the Dead knew this quartet of concert favourites would form the core of their first live album. The first night was treated as a test run to ensure the equipment was functioning. On the second night they delivered what Lesh claimed was "one of the finest sets ever" – only to discover that one of the 16 channels had malfunctioned and not a note of Bob Weir's guitar had been preserved on tape.

On the third night they prayed for a miracle – and got one as they matched and then eclipsed how they had played the night before. The recordings of "The Eleven" and "Turn On Your Love Light" from that set are the ones heard on *Live/Dead*.

A month later they booked in for a four-night residency at San Francisco's Carousel Ballroom, which by now had been taken over by Bill Graham and renamed the Fillmore West. In the intervening four weeks they had played another 18 shows around the country, refining and pushing their improvisational flights to even greater intuitive heights.

From the first night at the Fillmore West in February 1969, "Dark Star" and "St Stephen" were selected for the album. When "Death Don't Have No Mercy", "Feedback" and a brief rendition of the spiritual "And We Bid You Goodnight" were taped three nights later, the first live rock album ever recorded on 16-track was in the can.

There are more than 80 live recordings available of "Dark Star", but few of them top the totemic version on *Live/Dead*. It formed the soundtrack to this reviewer's first acid trip one hot

CRITICS' VERDICT

"I wasn't expecting too much from this, having been bored silly by the Dead on their previous three albums. But all the fuss is clarified on this double-album... which allows them to stretch out and take their time layin' the licks down. 'Dark Star' is almost worth the price of the album, as Phil Lesh brings his bass guitar up to join the guitars of Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir in the front line for some surprisingly delicate and inventive interplay... Listening to this, you can glimpse what all the fuss has been about."

RICHARD WILLIAMS, MELODY MAKER, MARCH 14, 1970

TRACKMARKS

1. Dark Star ★★★★★
2. St. Stephen ★★★★★
3. The Eleven ★★★★
4. Turn On Your Love Light ★★★★
5. Death Don't Have No Mercy ★★★★
6. Feedback ★★★
7. And We Bid You Goodnight ★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Produced by: Grateful Dead; Bob Matthews; Betty Cantor
Recorded at: Avalon Ballroom and Fillmore West, San Francisco
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (vocals, congas, organ), Tom Constanten (organ)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 64

summer night in 1970 and half a century later its opening bars still provoke a flashback to those halcyon times. There's an old joke that goes, "What did the Deadhead say when his drugs ran out?" To which the punchline is: "Man, this band sucks." Yet you do not need to be chemically altered or enhanced to appreciate the ecstatic, lysergic thrill of "Dark Star", which seems to reveal something new every time you listen, no matter how many times you've heard it before.

The piece had started life as a Garcia modal noodle to which Robert Hunter had added a brief, haiku-like lyric with a nod to TS Eliot's "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock", but an early three-minute single version of the song contained no hint of how it would stretch out on stage to become the band's magic carpet. Trailing clouds of glory, the 23-minute version on *Live/Dead* ebbs and flows seamlessly, Weir's loose, jazzy chords underpinning Garcia's cosmic soloing, while Lesh's high, contrapuntal basslines are as melodic as they are rhythmic.

The moment Garcia's solo takes off at 8 minutes 20 seconds is one of the most joyous and transcendental in rock – and we're only a third of the way into the journey. Sensibly, the Dead never bothered trying to record this iteration of "Dark Star" in the studio. The definitive version had been captured on *Live/Dead*, its preternatural spirit only to be re-summoned on the right night, when the celestial bodies were in alignment.

"St Stephen" had appeared in a studio version on *Aoxomoxoa* but here is given a raucous jam-band makeover before seguing into "The Eleven", named after the hurtling complexities of its 11/8 time signature. The vocals are gloriously out of tune, but as they take up a mere 40 seconds of a nine-minute guitar epic it hardly matters.

THERE'S A SENSE OF WONDER TO THE ACID VISIONS ON *LIVE/DEAD*

By 1969, Pigpen's role had been diminished with Tom Constanten taking over his Hammond organ, but "Turn On Your Love Light" represents his finest moment with the Dead. Banging a conga drum and rapping like a revivalist preacher, he takes the piece to climax after climax during its 15-minute tumult, his soulful interjections acting as a timely reminder that for all their cosmic jousting, the Dead never lost sight of the fact that they were still a dance band.

"Death Don't Have No Mercy" is a classic Bay Area psych-blues and not dissimilar to how Big Brother & The Holding Company or Quicksilver Messenger Service might have played it on a good night, but is made singular by Garcia's tremulous vocal, offering the first hint of the aching emotion he would develop so potently on *Workingman's Dead*.

The set ends with "Feedback", eight self-descriptive minutes of avant-garde freakery before the sonic storm subsides and transitions into a miraculous lullaby as Garcia and Weir's earthy a cappella harmonies bid us goodnight with an antique spiritual learnt either from Nonesuch's field recording of the Bahamian singer Joseph Spence or, more likely, from the version on the Incredible String Band's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*.

The Dead would continue making remarkable and innovative music for another quarter of a century. But there's a sense of innocence and wonder to the acid visions of *Live/Dead* that means it will forever stand as a pinnacle of their creative achievement. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

WORKINGMAN'S DEAD

RELEASED JUNE 14, 1970

Less space, more time capsule. The Dead mine gold in rootsy tales of blue-collar Americana.

BY GRAEME THOMSON

GRATEFUL Dead agnostics entering their world for the first time on *Workingman's Dead* might well wonder whether the band's reputation for unfettered adventurism has been somewhat exaggerated. Rather than the spiralling open-ended psychedelic jams of legend, laid down on *Live/Dead* and countless West Coast stages, here are rootsy, traditionally structured, tightly performed songs, conforming to the prevailing fashion for excavating America's mythical frontier history as an antidote to grim goings-on in Vietnam.

In the words of drummer Mickey Hart, their fourth studio album is the sound of San Francisco's hippie vanguard "stepping out of our space suit and coming down to earth". Transforming themselves into a tight Bakersfield band singing about the lives of ordinary men, they sound closer to The Strangers than Frumious Bandersnatch.

At the time, it seemed a more profound shift than it was in reality. Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir both had strong connections to country, folk and blues via previous bands. The Dead's move out of Haight-Ashbury in 1968 to Larkspur, in Marin County, encouraged a more down-home direction, while hanging out with Crosby, Stills & Nash sharpened their instincts for harmony singing. With hindsight, the ragtime-y "Dupree's Diamond Blues" on *Aoxomoxoa* was a clear signal of imminent full immersion. In 1969, Garcia bought a Zane Beck pedal-steel guitar, and its sound – sharp and bright as moonshine – would prove central to the next record.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The first studio-recorded effort to capture their essence and it's a joy from beginning to end. The Dead understand electric music better than anyone, and here they show that they understand acoustic music... There are eight numbers here... and all have that relaxation which is their trademark. The interplay between the instruments is their secret, and that's something which comes only from playing together for years. There's nothing loud or head-breaking here, but the guts and drive are still in evidence."

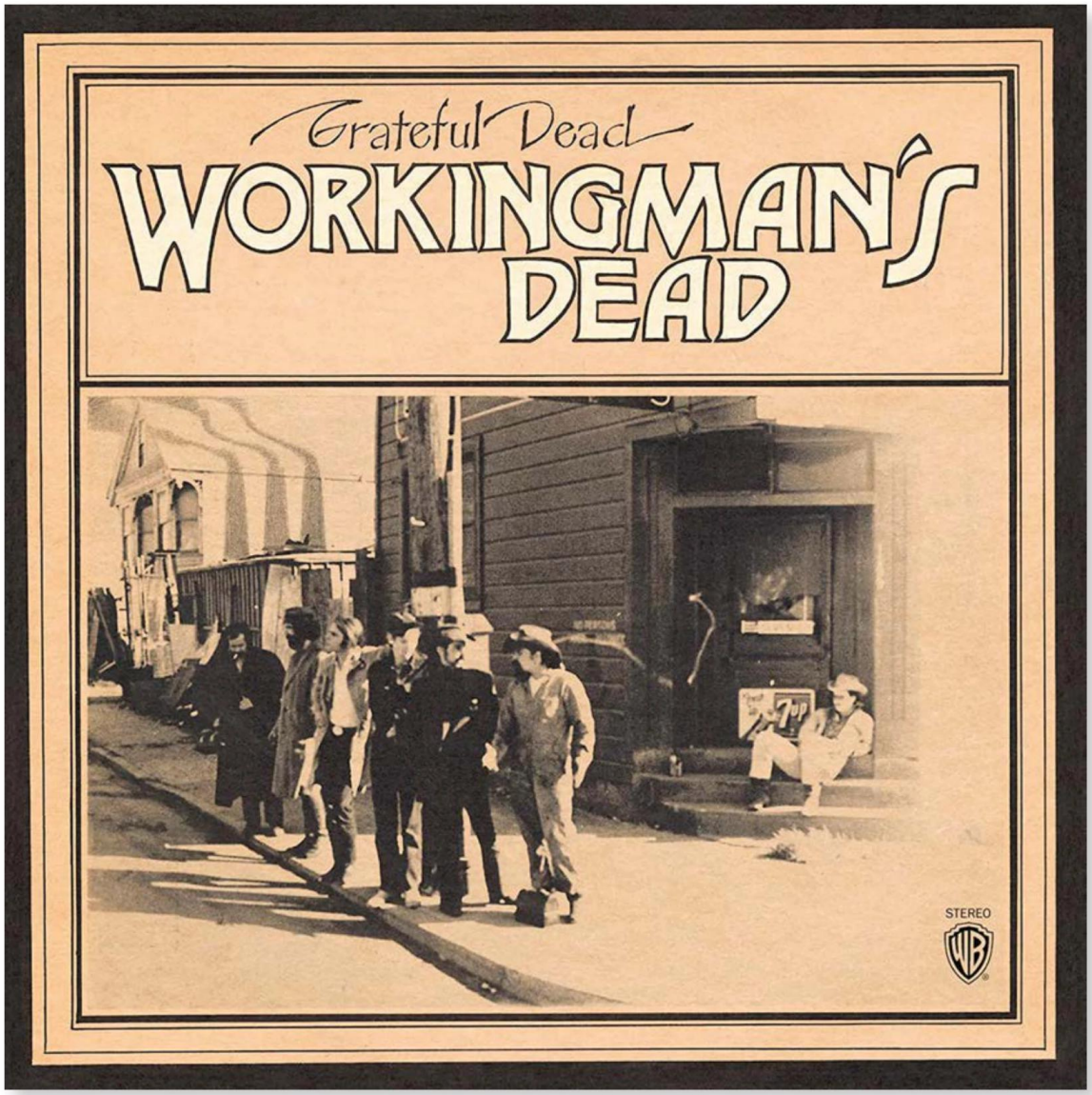
RICHARD WILLIAMS, MELODY MAKER, AUGUST 1, 1970

Change was in the air. Lyricist Robert Hunter had been heavily influenced by Robbie Robertson's lyric writing on The Band's first two albums, released in 1968 and 1969. "The direction he went with The Band was one of the things that made me think of conceiving *Workingman's Dead*," Hunter said in 1988. "I was very much impressed with the area Robertson was working in. I took it and moved it to the West, which is an area I'm familiar with... regional but not the South, because everyone was going back to the South for inspiration at that time."

At Larkspur, Hunter would reel off lyrics on his typewriter and hand them to Garcia, a series of character-driven story songs about miners, truck drivers, railway men, card-playing loners. His fascinations were key to unlocking the sound of *Workingman's Dead*: these soil-rooted words needed earthy music, not galactic voyaging.

Writing and playing throughout the second half of 1969, the Dead debuted much of the material live and rehearsed the arrangements further before going into the studio in February 1970. Working at Pacific High in San Francisco, they completed the album in nine days.

The result was eight simple songs, wrapped in bright melody and warm organic textures. Musically, *Workingman's Dead* makes perfect sense in the context of what was happening in American music at the end of the '60s. It is a record with many parents: not only The Band, but Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline*, The Byrds' *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* and Flying Burrito Brothers' *Gilded Palace Of Sin*. Yet while the record cocks its ear to the country-rock revival, it is ultimately more interested in the



TRACKMARKS

1. Uncle John's Band ★★★★
2. High Time ★★★★
3. Dire Wolf ★★★
4. New Speedway Boogie ★★★★
5. Cumberland Blues ★★★★
6. Black Peter ★★★★
7. Easy Wind ★★★
8. Casey Jones ★★★★★

Recorded: Pacific High Recording, San Francisco, February 1970
Label: Warner Bros.
Producer: Bob Matthews, Betty Cantor, Grateful Dead
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (lead guitar, pedal-steel guitar, banjo, vocals, lead vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals, co-lead vocals on "Cumberland Blues"), Pigpen (Ron McKernan) (keyboards, harmonica, vocals, lead vocals on "Easy Wind"), Phil Lesh (bass, vocals), Bill Kreutzmann (drums, percussion), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion), David Nelson (acoustic guitar on "Cumberland Blues")
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 27

foundations. The hard-edged rock'n'roll-tinged notes of the late '50s Bakersfield sound is its true north; its lodestars Buck Owens and Merle Haggard.

You can hear their influence slicing through the perky "Dire Wolf", which, with its jaunty vocal and spiralling pedal-steel guitar, also nods to the lighter moments on *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*. The spare, halting "High Time" is tears-in-your-beer country plainsong, a spooky old-time Appalachian ballad filtered through the cracked lens of Gram Parsons. "Casey Jones" is the easy-rocking tale of a coke-snorting train driver, its ageless good-time groove laid under a great whisky-soaked, vowel-chewing vocal from Garcia. The lazy front-porch acoustic blues of "Black Peter" has a whiff of The Band's piney melancholy, not least in Garcia's slightly racked echoes of Richard Manuel, but also taps into something more fundamental.

"Uncle John's Band" feels more contemporary. A breezily pretty confection with a lively, almost calypso rhythm, it stands in thrall to Crosby, Stills & Nash, who released their debut album in May 1969. Singing a capella in tight three-point harmony, as Garcia, Weir and Phil Lesh do near the song's conclusion, would have seemed fanciful even a year before, but here they soar. The double-time banjo on the bluegrass-country crossover "Cumberland Blues", where Weir shares lead vocals and Lesh picks up his sole songwriting credit, all but predicts the Eagles. It ends in a great sunburst of melody and frantic picking.

At other times, the gears grind into something with a little more heft. "New Speedway Boogie" is a greasy R&B roller, mired in a darkness that may or may not have been drawn from The Rolling Stones' murderous show at nearby Altamont Speedway two months previously, at which the Dead refused to play. "*In the heat of the sun a man died of cold*," Garcia warns. There are also echoes – "*the hour was so late...*" – of Dylan's apocalyptic fable, "All Along The Watchtower". Written solely by Hunter and sung by Pigpen, "Easy Wind" is a hard-edged funky blues that falls somewhere between Tim Buckley and Steppenwolf. Extended soloing is largely curtailed on *Workingman's Dead*, but "Easy Wind" often spiralled into the ether on stage. With its shifting time signatures and huffing harmonica, it's the closest the record comes to heavy.

> "CUMBERLAND BLUES", WRITTEN BY LESH, ALL BUT PREDICTS THE EAGLES

Following the album's release in early summer, the Dead's shift in emphasis was written plain. Not only was it evident on the cover – which jettisons the psychedelic cartooning of *Aoxomoxoa* for sepia, monochromatic nostalgia – but also in the title itself: explicitly self-referential, it announces a new blue-collar iteration of the band.

In many ways, it's a smartly expedient record. If the plan was to save money, gain radio play and pick up some of the financial slack that had aggregated in recent years, it worked like a charm. "Uncle John's Band" crept into the lower reaches of the *Billboard* Hot 100, "Casey Jones" was a radio hit, and the album breached the Top 30. The Grateful Dead were suddenly reassembled in the public imagination as an accessible group with actual *songs*. What's more, they were on a roll. ●

"The music is constantly evolving"

Naive in studio and cumbersome on road, the Grateful Dead are struggling to get their essence across. Thankfully *Live/Dead* bottles the lightning, and they don't plan on dying with the Haight-Ashbury dream when there are still youth culture battles to fight. "Rock'n'roll is what the kids think a bout absolute authority," PHIL LESH tells Richard Williams, "Get out of my life!"

CHRIS WALTER/GETTY IMAGES

The Grateful Dead, 1970: (clockwise) Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann, Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, Mickey Hart and Jerry Garcia

CREDIT

"We've been on the road every weekend": the Dead at The Family Dog, San Francisco, February 1970

ROBERT ALTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

"IT TOOK US FOUR ALBUMS TO LEARN HOW TO RECORD OURSELVES"

PHIL LESH

MELODY MAKER MAY 30, 1970

IN BRITAIN at any rate, the Grateful Dead almost became the victims of their own legend.

They were part of the paraphernalia of acidology, which included the Pranksters, the Family Dog, 1967, Owsley, Acid Tests, and Haight Street, and it was difficult to forget it.

Many thousands of miles away from their context, the first three Dead albums (*Grateful Dead*, *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*) sounded lifeless. Was it all a myth? Were they really cardboard heroes, important only for their part in the extra-musical aspects of rock'n'roll history?

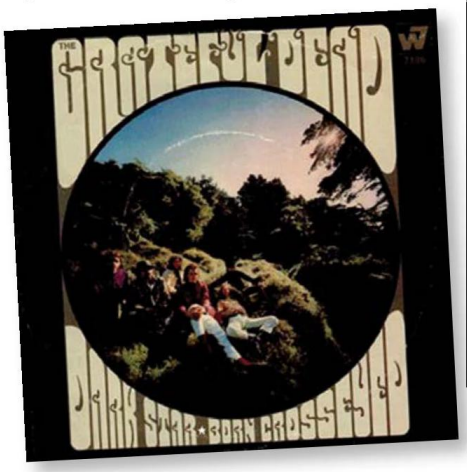
For me, the answer came with a track called "Dark Star", which takes up the whole of a side of *Live/Dead*, the fourth and most recently released of their albums in Britain.

This opened it all up, and explained every superlative ever heaped on the band's collective head. A masterpiece of electronic improvisational music, it was followed closely in quality by the rest of the album.

Phil Lesh, the Dead's bassist, arrived in London last week ahead of the rest of the band, for their gig at the Hollywood Festival. He agreed with my assessment of their recordings and explained why it had happened.

"We simply haven't known how to make records," he told me, "and we figured the only way to make them was to learn ourselves, because we tried recording with a producer at the beginning and it was really hopeless. It all sounded completely flat.

"*Anthem Of The Sun* is the most satisfying of the first three to me, because we had the almost impossible task of making an album from very little material.



"The way it went very tight from the compositional standpoint was pleasing, and it's very coherent – I can still follow it all the way through. But still we all knew that it was 100 per cent noncommercial, and I certainly don't like the way it was mixed.

"I know we could have done it better, but we simply didn't know how. It was strange because we took stuff from three studio sessions and eight or nine gigs and put it all together without thinking of levels or equalising. We just did it from a musical standpoint, which is not enough.

"Anyway, it took us four albums and untold thousands of dollars to learn how to record ourselves. The music though was really good and deserved a better fate.

"Even the live album, which I like, was put out six months after it was recorded, and even longer in Britain, and we do all the numbers completely differently now.

"The music is constantly evolving, progressing and regressing on many different levels.

"We have a new one out in the States, called *Workingman's Dead*, which I'm very pleased with... It has four pretty songs on one side which are the most commercial. It's certainly the best of any of our studio work, and I hope it's a success because we want to stop touring.

"We've been on the road every weekend since October, and we really need a rest... if only to think up some new music."

Moving the Dead around the country is a massive operation, because they carry probably more equipment than any other band in the world. The fact that they use 17 microphones, and that their excess freight bill on the flight to London was $1,500, should demonstrate this slightly.

"When you're playing out of doors you really have to be super loud, so I guess it came partly out of that. Nobody could do it at first, then as the bands got louder it became a question of actually hearing yourself on stage while you're playing.

"So monitors are our problem, and we've yet to solve the problem of monitoring the acoustic part of our performance, which is a fairly recent innovation. It's not set up to do that.

"But the sound is so much better out of doors. Everything is better... the air, the wind, the trees."

The acoustic music came about because most of the members of the band played acoustic instruments before the Dead began, and it's fun to play traditional acoustic numbers. On this part of the show they're joined by two people called Marmaduke and Dave Nelson, who are members of The New Riders Of The Purple Sage, a band who have the same relationship to the Dead as Hot Tuna have to the Airplane. Guitarist Jerry Garcia and drummer Mickey Hart are in both bands, and The New Riders travel all over the States with the Dead, playing on their gigs.

They're old friends, and although they didn't come to Britain on this trip, Phil promises that they will accompany them next time round.

"We've really got a show now – all we need is Pigpen with three black chicks backing him up and we're there!" There has been a departure from the band recently. Organist Tom Constanten left, and no keyboards are now used, with the exception of Pigpen. Phil says: "He plays a little organ now and then, but we're trying to discourage him."

Such alterations in personnel are rare for the group, whose only other change since their inception five years ago has been the addition of a second drummer, Mickey Hart.

"It really began for us in the summer of 1966, a year before the big Haight-Ashbury thing. It was like a home-town then... you could walk down the street and know everybody.

"Nobody believed it would ever go sour, because we gave it to the media everybody would go wild. I guess we didn't think far enough ahead – we thought it would just filter through and whoever wanted to know would come along.

"But in fact everybody who wanted to get themselves straight came to San Francisco, because the drugs were there, and the city government turned very uptight, whereas before the publicity they were pretty liberal.

"So everybody went back to their home towns until it got quiet again. Now it's happening everywhere... all the campuses are really beautiful, and they're turning on to the new lifestyle.

"The shootings at Kent State are what happens when the pigs get on the campuses, because the kids just aren't going to allow them in there.

"Rock'n'roll is what the kids think about absolute authority – get out of my life! Woodstock showed how people who think alike can live together, but it got ripped off. It was an expression of faith by everybody, those people were there to dig each other and themselves."

"The US population has a profound preference for songs"

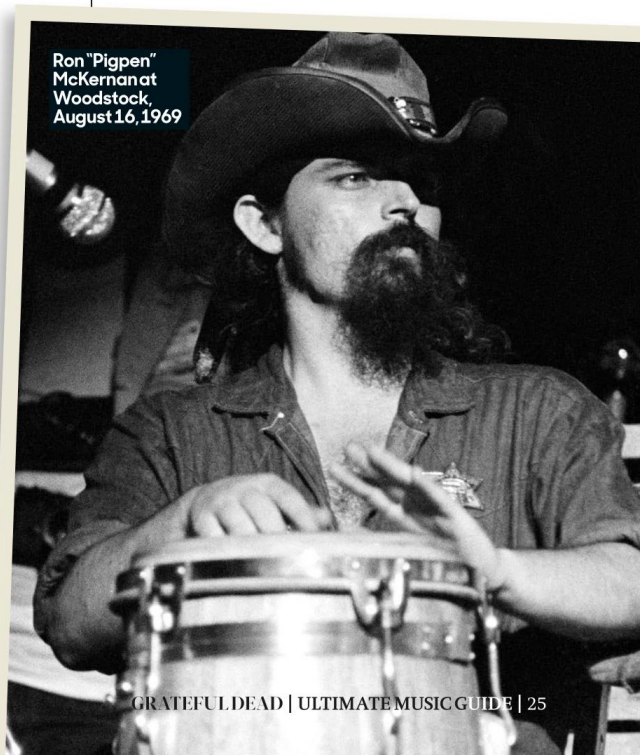
Fifty years on from their magnificent albums *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, Grateful Dead members, friends, guest players and producers recall their transformation from nitrous oxide–guzzling burners of studio time to fully rehearsed, utterly accessible tunesmiths. "We knew we had something saleable," BOB WEIR tells John Robinson. "It was part of our evolution."

TOM CONSTANTEN *[Keyboards, 1968–1970]:* I was reminiscing with a friend recently about my LSD excursions out in the desert. Life is so linear – like our conversation: you/me/you. When you're tripping it is multilinear to the max, and that's what it was like when we were playing music. We'd be playing two or three continuities of thought off one another, back off each other. I remember one time in Chicago I got a good lick off and Pigpen threw me a salute from across the stage. It was like he was bestowing a medal on me.

BOB WEIR *[Guitar/Vocals 1965-1995]:* We would practise every day for long hours. That's what it takes to come together as a band and to be able to play the other guys in the band and to have them be able to play you. We listened to a lot of jazz musicians and their approach seemed like a lot of fun to us – we were going to find more adventure that way.

DENNIS McNALLY *[Grateful Dead biographer/PR]:* The Grateful Dead was a work in progress. They were growing in all directions at all times. They had started out as your basic bar covers band: Rolling Stones and Dylan covers, even a Lovin' Spoonful song. They had focused for a while on being a blues band as Pigpen was their strongest personality musically, before becoming a profoundly John Coltrane-influenced jazz-fusion rock band.

TOM CONSTANTEN: The repertoire was extremely limited but wildly adventurous. Every show we played that I was on the bus for, we had two extended jams which were our mainstays: "St Stephen/The Eleven/Lovelight" and "Alligator/Caution". Plus any number of "Dark Star"s. There are so many recordings out there, but I would recommend any "Dark Star" from ➤



Ron "Pigpen" McKernan at Woodstock, August 16, 1969

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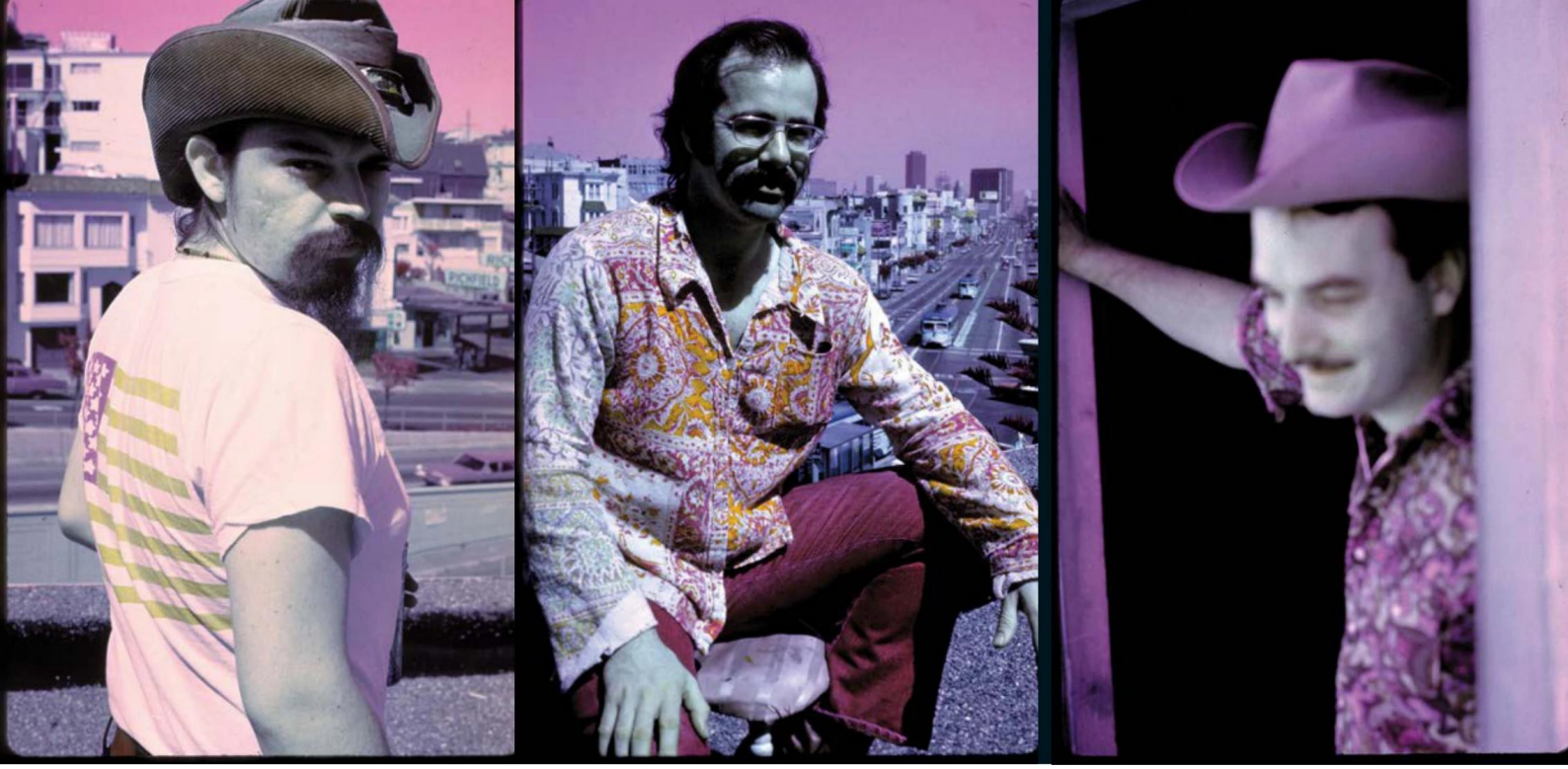


the Fillmore East, because there was something magical about all of them.

BOB MATTHEWS [*Co-producer, Workingman's Dead]:* The first record [*Grateful Dead, 1967*] had been done at RCA in LA: four nights, then Saturday we mixed it. There were many battles, technically, between our technical people and the quote-unquote professionals. The second album [*Anthem Of The Sun, 1968*], it improved as [*GD sound engineer*] Dan Healy worked with the record company.

STEPHEN BARNCARD *[producer, American Beauty]:* I'd heard the stories about them working with Dave Hassinger – you know the story about Weir asking for "thick air" and then Hassinger walking out. I puzzled over that term for several years. I'd heard about the LSD hours at the studio. They set up tents.

BOB MATTHEWS: At the time, the San Francisco scene was going somewhere. I told them I wanted to be their engineer and told them – particularly Bob Weir, who I went to high school with – that if the Grateful Dead were going to do a good record of themselves they would have to do it within themselves – and that I wanted to be that person to help them do it.

TOM CONSTANTEN: With *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa* we got out there farther than anyone else, I think. I was at Darmstadt in 1962 and 1963 with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez. For two years I was the private student of Luciano Berio in Italy at his house in Liguria and then in Milan. I was also guest of Henri Pousseur in Brussels in 1962 where he did "Trois Visages De Lieges". That was my background. My feet weren't yet firmly planted on this planet.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON [*Co-producer, Workingman's Dead*]: *Aoxomoxoa* was a marathon of sorts, it was very experimental. We had an eight track, a 12-track and finally we got a 16-track, from Ampex. So we decided to shitcan everything and start over.

BOB MATTHEWS: *Aoxomoxoa*, we always labelled that album as "how not to make a record". We made it twice.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: We had that 16-track revelation. We could do everything live.

DENNIS McNALLY: It was potentially a masterpiece, but they lost it in the mix. Not least through mixing while doing nitrous oxide. It was amazingly good material, but it not did not come together perfectly. They had signed a contract which permitted them unlimited recording, so that by January 1970 they owed Warner Brothers $250,000, which was at that time a very considerable amount of money.

> **"JERRY WOULD BE VERY DIRECT, VERY LEO. THESE WERE HIS SONGS"**
> BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON

STEPHEN BARNCARD: The previous albums are all experiments and kind of jovial: "We can freak out"; "We have unlimited studio time." The money they owed the record company was really stacking up, so [*Warner Bros MD*] Joe Smith had really read them the riot act. They were not only broke but they had to have a hit or they were going to get dropped from Warners.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: Joe Smith was horrified by *Aoxomoxoa*. *Live/Dead* was the first 16-track live album, but Warner Bros wouldn't consider it as counting against the completion of their contract. But that's really who the Dead are: it's live. They're interacting with the audience and with each other and that brings an energy to it.

NED LAGIN *[keyboards, American Beauty]:* They were not that famous then. When I saw them five months earlier in a club [*the Ark/The Boston Tea Party, 1969*], they were still playing through twin reverbs – it wasn't a big stage set-up. My friends almost dragged me there. They didn't play when they were supposed to play, they came out and just sort of sat on their amplifiers sort of stoned out.

BOB MATTHEWS: It was unique. You listen to a Grateful Dead concert and it's all one song. Each night is a different arrangement, that's what's so fun. They would start with a song and that's all which would be defined. By the end of that someone would have played something to take this somewhere else. In the studio it was precisely maintained but it still had life and excitement.

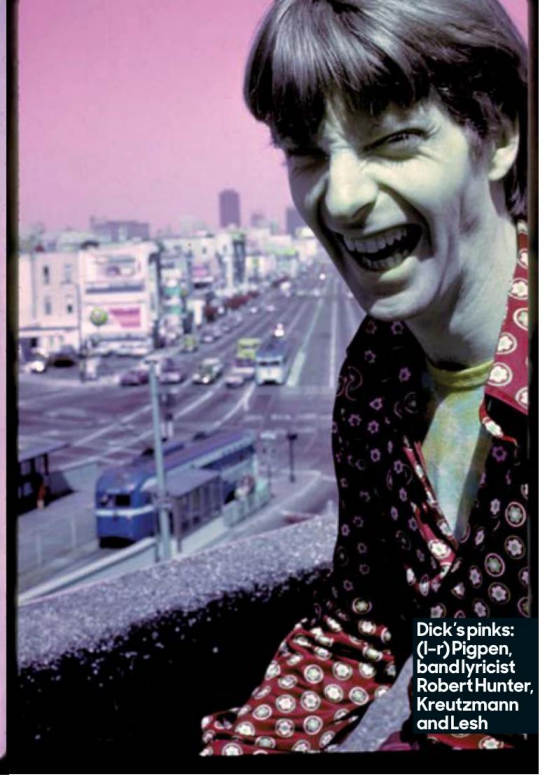
BOB WEIR: The Haight-Ashbury was starting to get pretty seedy. The media focus on the "hippie explosion" in San Francisco brought every loose nut and bolt rattling out to the coast and with them came hard drugs and all that kind of stuff. And it quickly became something quite different.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: We pretty much moved to Marin. Everyone was out here. It was free and easy – it was more rural then. Some people call it the country.

BOB WEIR: My girlfriend was fond of horses and I'd grown up around them. Then someone gave me a couple of horses. We rented a little 80-acre spread and we started raising them. It had me stretched pretty thin. It only lasted a couple of years but I found I really wasn't up to being the task of being a working musician and a gentleman rancher.

DENNIS McNALLY: In April of 1969, when they were at the height of their powers as a jazz-rock fusion band, Robert Hunter and his wife and his brother moved in with Jerry Garcia and his wife. The sheer propinquity of living in the same place deepened their songwriting partnership. One of

WARNER BROS RECORDS/STANLEY MOUSE


Dick's pinks: (l-r) Pigpen, bandlyricist Robert Hunter, Kreutzmann and Lesh

the most interesting things I ever heard was the work tape that Jerry gave to Hunter to write "Uncle John's Band". It sounds like the Grateful Dead in 1969: it is open-ended, a series of cool changes that goes on for 45 minutes just jamming on this chord change in a very high, intense, loud way.

BOB WEIR: We were dedicatedly non-topical. It seemed to us in our songwriting that the muse would tell us what we were writing about and that if we tried to tell it what we were writing about then it would necessarily come out stilted. I had a realisation that songs are an actual lifeform and we host them – they come to visit our dimension. A good songwriter is someone who is adept at opening the doors and windows and letting them in.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: We thought we'd give Warner Bros what they wanted. Like, "We're going to do songs for them, we're going to hammer them together and we're going to knock this baby out." The songs were together and we got it done in no time. The whole thing took about three weeks.

BOB WEIR: We were hanging with Crosby, Stills and Nash a little bit. They moved up to Marin County right when they were hitting the airwaves and right before we did those records. And just hanging with them, the notion of songwriting and a more prosaic approach to the creation of our songs started to bud in us. And that's what grew out of it – we started songwriting: Jerry first and then I was pretty quick on his heels.

TOM CONSTANTEN: A common belief is that we were moving towards those songs and that made me irrelevant because I was out and into space. The borderline looks very different to me. The first time I heard "Dire Wolf" and "Black Peter", Jerry Garcia came by my house and played them for me. But the real pressure was from the record company. Back then we had to have a 45rpm single which was about three minutes long.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: The live stuff was still going on, this was just another aspect of it – another way of them expressing themselves. This was Jerry and Hunter's roots. And Bobby too. They all came from this bluegrass folk thing.

TOM CONSTANTEN: Let me give you a vision of alternative history. When I was in the Dead it was two bands: when Jerry was running it and when Pigpen was running it. When Pigpen was running it, it was a totally different band, more like a blues band. His dad, Phil McKernan, was a blues DJ on the radio and by the time he was a teenager Ron was up to speed with the arcanology of the blues. He was there from so early... He was my beloved brother from a different mother.

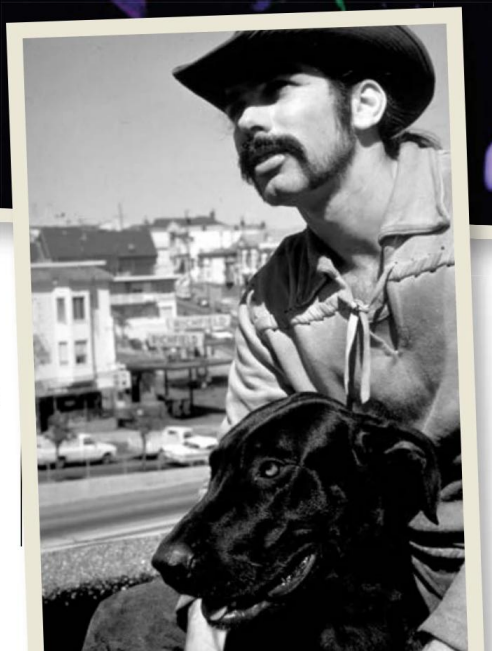
BOB MATTHEWS: *Workingman's Dead* was done at Alembic Studios, which used to be Pacific High. We went into the studio and set up enough to record stereo, enough to be able to record something listenable. So in two days we recorded all the songs which are on *Workingman's Dead*, plus "Mason's Children". It didn't fit with the rest of the music, but it was a good tune.

BOB WEIR: We were listening to the radio at the time and there was a tune Merle Haggard did called "Workingman's Blues" – and Jerry and were real fond of that tune. It incorporated an aesthetic that we appreciated and so I guess I picked up a little of that. There was a lot more cross-pollinating in that period of music, different schools of music were listening to each other and were pollinating more freely.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: The plan was to have the songs worked out – some of the working out happened in the studio. Our friend Peter Weston had Pacific High, then it became Alembic. It was up an alley behind the old Carousel Ballroom. Peter was one of the hippies and he'd been around for a while! I think Mickey got Peter's old board up at his barn. I can definitely say we had a lot of fun. We would start late and finish late. We didn't work all night, but it was definitely not office hours. Jerry was definitely the bandleader, oh yeah! It worked well – in the studio, Jerry would be very direct, very Leo, and just say what he wanted. These were his songs, so the band had to go along with his direction of it.

NED LAGIN: Jerry was the lead personality. In the studio he could be supportive but also tough on the other musicians in the band. Garcia was able to be tough in the studio: he knew what he wanted, he was the leader. But he could say some pretty hard things about their playing or what they were doing. I was embarrassed by some of it, but his goal was to, for example, get a groove going and he was very critical of those who were not able to do that.

Garcia and (below) Hart: both in other bands



BOB MATTHEWS: One of the reasons Jerry and I worked so well together was that you would see a light bulb go off over his head, then he'd turn around and describe it and say, "Matthews, can you make it happen?" He would have a vision of a sound, some kind of artistic vision. That started on [*Workingman's Dead*]. He would describe how he would want an arrangement modification or a feel. Like "High Time" uses the Leslie speaker for his guitar lead. That would be an example – "Can we make a guitar sound like an organ?" He was a good friend. I was usually about four beats behind him in his thinking.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: Everyone loves everybody here, so nobody takes it badly, it's not a harshness. It's a help. It's a teaching – it's a structure that he feels and if someone else has an idea he was open to it. I remember saying to him, "You can't use that intro..." "OK, I'll change it." When it came to the organisation of it, all the responsibilities came to him, the final call was always his, but he didn't want it.

BOB MATTHEWS: After we had made all of these stereo tapes, me and Betty sequenced it: side one, song one and so on. After that we kept the band hanging out in the studio while Jerry, Betty and I cut together a demo side one and two with the order it was going to be. Then we made a bunch of cassette copies and gave them to the band for them to spend two weeks woodshedding at their rehearsal hall in Point Reyes Station, which they did.

BOB WEIR: We knew we had some good songs ➤

going into the studio. We were only in there for two weeks, maybe three. They translated to tape pretty well. We knew we had something saleable – that people were actually going to buy. Commercial viability still wasn't among our considerations for *Workingman's Dead* or *American Beauty* for that matter – it was just that things were arranging themselves in such a manner that this time it was going to be commercially viable. It was part of our evolution.

BOB MATTHEWS: The album shipped gold! Betty became very skilled at vinyl mastering – she had a fine ear for it. After we made acetates, which we did in LA because there weren't any mastering studios in the Bay Area, we stopped by Warner Bros records. Joe Smith said two things: "You did it for under $14,000," and "You can hear the voices!" Which definitely helped the album sales. It was platinum not long after.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: Joe Smith was horrified by *Aoxomoxoa*. But he loved *Workingman's Dead* because it was songs. It was easier for him to relate to – that was the kind of guy he was. It was the first time I got to mix a tune by myself, which was "New Speedway Boogie". It felt like a breakthrough, it reached new audiences. I also mastered it by myself – everyone else was on the road. I thought, 'This is down to me. I can't go along with the formula where you say this is what the record sounds like, I can't walk out of here like that.' So I changed everything and waited until the band got home. I put it on and held my breath, but what I did translated into the vinyl. I played it and everybody's mouth dropped open because it sounded so damn good. This really sounds good!

DENNIS McNALLY: Joe Smith – who had, I might add, been given much grief – had shown commendable patience. He put on the tape fully expecting to hear another psychedelic orgy. And instead he got "Uncle John's Band". He was running up and down the corridors of Warner Bros in ecstasy shouting, "The Grateful Dead have made a record!" It was of fundamental importance to them because it and *American Beauty* – it's important to pair them – introduced them to FM radio across the country. The American population has a profound preference for songs.

NED LAGIN: I knew a little bit about country & western but not a lot – I knew about Buck Owens and Roy Clark. When I was in California that summer, I shared a lot of influences with Garcia and he shared a lot with me. I learned all the *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* tunes to play on. Garcia recommended to me that I listen to a lot of bluegrass players, not for the patterns but for the lead lines.

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: Bob and I had signed up to do a movie, *Medicine Ball Caravan* – the Dead backed out of the deal.

DENNIS McNALLY: The idea was they would travel across the country and live in tepees and give concerts and Warner Bros would get a movie out of it. At some point sanity prevailed and the Grateful Dead manager said, "My guys don't sleep in tepees; that's not going to happen."

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON: But we were already signed up as Alembic to do the recording. So we had to go, and while we were on that trip, as we were travelling across the country recording all kinds of Warner Bros bands, they were in the studio recording *American Beauty*.

BOB MATTHEWS: It was annoying.

DENNIS McNALLY: So suddenly the Grateful Dead had this block of time. And for the first time San Francisco had a real good professional studio. If you look at what was recorded at Wally Heider's between '69 and '71... There were three studios and people would wander between them. The reason that Jerry Garcia plays on [*CSNY's*] "Teach Your Children" is because Crosby said, "Come here, man, and play some pedal steel." That lick is literally first take. Jerry is on the Crosby solo project *If Only I Could Remember My Name*, *Volunteers*, *Blows Against The Empire*...

NED LAGIN: In one room was the Grateful Dead, in the others it varied between Crosby and Santana. The very young Carlos Santana was in awe of Garcia, which was a little embarrassing. I liked Jerry but I wasn't in awe of him. It was the Mount Olympus of San Francisco rock, everyone playing and cross-pollinating.

STEPHEN BARNCARD: Graham [*Nash*] asked Jerry to do the steel overdub on "Teach Your Children" – it was not a lap steel but a pedal steel. [*Producer*] Bill Halverson had not shown up. I was the only guy standing, so I set up another room. The only roadie there was Ram Rod and he set up. Neil [*Young*] says he was there, but he wasn't. We took two takes.

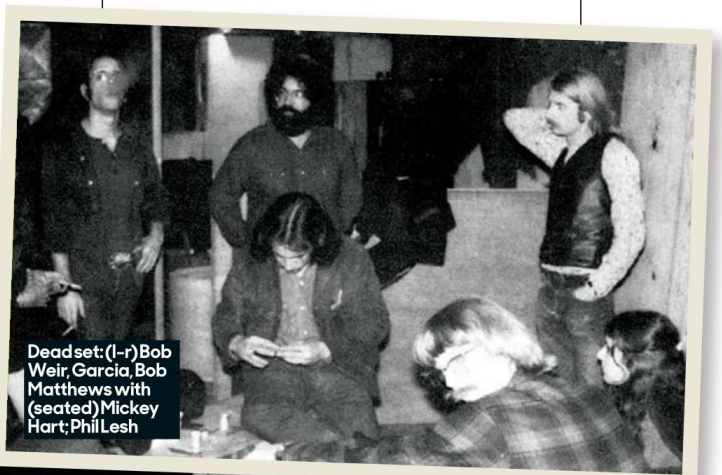
NED LAGIN: When I was invited to California, I got off the bus and I walked to Wally Heider's studio. Garcia was already there alone and he said, "Ah, it's good old Grateful Ned! You can play on our album." I spent part of the summer doing that, though I only ended up on "Candyman". Jerry knew from my experience I could find or mimic a groove, which he found problematic with some of the other musicians. I had quoted Count Basie to him: "Even one note can swing."

STEPHEN BARNCARD: They knuckled down and they woodshedded it all. They were so ready, I couldn't believe it. Bill Kreutzmann helped a lot, being a jazz-based drummer. He was like a quartz clock. He would be playing pretty lightly and dynamically and he would follow the acoustic guitars, and he knew the spaces where the vocals were going to go.

DENNIS McNALLY: By the time they did *American Beauty* their singing had developed considerably, thanks to *Workingman's Dead*. What happened was that it sounded even more lush then *Workingman's Dead*. They had "Ripple", which is a perfect song. I said that to Jerry and he said, "I don't know, man. It almost sounds like the song of a Presbyterian minister. If there were one more syllable in it, I don't think I could sing it."

BOB WEIR: We were young and it takes a while to learn to sing but we were starting to get the drift of how you do that – where you connect somewhere in your soul to your vocal apparatus and how you make that work for you in terms of storytelling and making music. It's infinitely complicated but also infinitely simple.

NED LAGIN: Everything is gone now, but in 1970... there was a cast of characters at Mickey's ranch. There was Rolling Thunder, who was a native



Dead set: (l-r) Bob Weir, Garcia, Bob Matthews with (seated) Mickey Hart; Phil Lesh

Hay day: the Dead in a 1970 promo shoot

WARNER BROS RECORDS/HERB GREENE

American shaman, and his tribal elders came. Hells Angels were hanging out there. All the musicians were there. Cipollina was there, Jorma, the Airplane, Barry Melton from the Fish. Young ladies dancing in diaphanous clothing. It was what you might think California might be like. Mickey was friends with all these people. Me and Garcia and Phil went to visit Grace and Paul at a place they had at Stinson beach and Crosby pulled up in his boat *The Mayan*. They were yelling stuff back and forth.

DAVID GRISMAN: I was visiting a friend in San Francisco for a few days in the summer. We heard about a softball game between the Dead and the Airplane in the small Marin County town of Fairfax and stopped by to say hi to Jerry. He asked me if I'd come down to Wally Heider's studio the next day and play some mandolin on a few songs.

STEPHEN BARNCARD: We did the first take of the first track of "Ripple". Grisman just played it as an arpeggio and so I did the producer thing, I said, "OK, let's get one more," and then from there I panned left and right and there you have the effect of David Grisman surrounding you. We didn't think about it, just did it – but it was the trust the band had in me, it allowed that to happen.

> **"THERE WAS A LOT OF SHARING OF DIFFERENT THINGS, LEARNING"**
> NED LAGIN

NED LAGIN: In 1970 I went where everybody else went. There was a softball team and I was part of that – I didn't know anyone else besides Grateful Dead people, didn't have my own car. Grisman didn't play softball – he was too concerned about his hands.

STEPHEN BARNCARD: In the studio I had to do a lot real quickly, because they were just ready to play. I mean, by second or third takes we had tracks, so obviously they had rehearsed a lot. It was almost a textbook perfect session. It got to the point where Phil would just have to look at me and make a face and I would make an adjustment. It was that type of a rapport. The Dead were starting to realise that [*it was better*] being fully charged and ready to go for a performance rather than to try and fix it track by track.

NED LAGIN: The mood was upbeat. Hunter was there and they were writing and rewriting vocals as they went along. They were making money with *Workingman's Dead*, so they were very upbeat. Robert Hunter and I didn't interact much, but he worked closely with Jerry. He would sit there with a notepad but wouldn't be there so much for the jams at Mickey's. It doesn't get mentioned at all, but Jerry explained to me that he didn't view himself as a hippie but as more of a beatnik. He and Hunter grew up when those guys were the dominant force in the San Francisco scene in art, literature and poetry.

STEPHEN BARNCARD: They were just a band – they weren't yet a phenomenon. They were only popular in New York and San Francisco and everything else they played in Flyover Country was just a gig. They were building it. *Workingman's Dead* was starting to get singles play. And *American Beauty* with "Truckin'". It was fun and entertaining, but there was no hint this was going to be a big record.

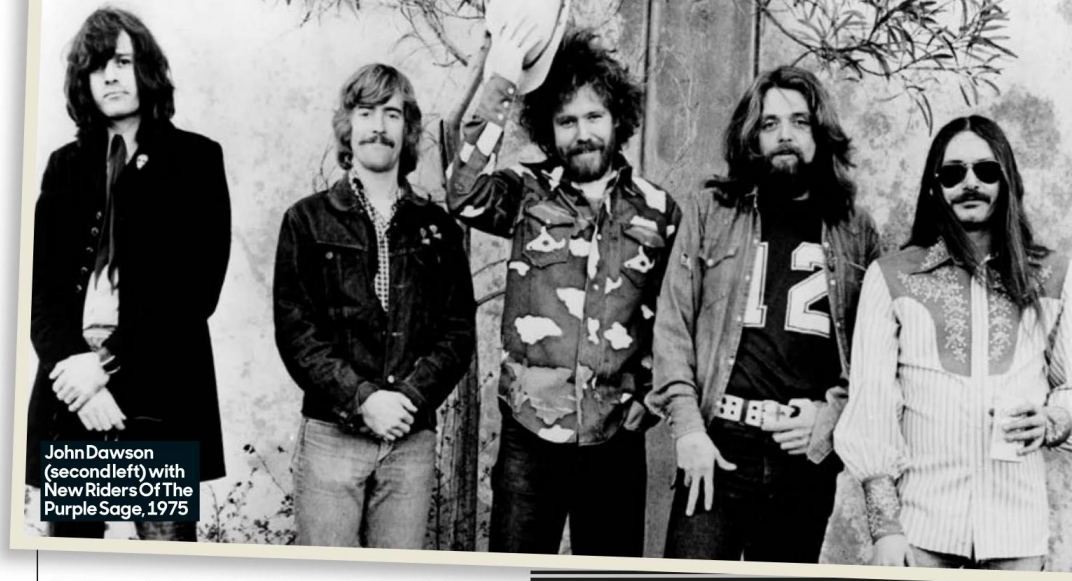
BOB WEIR: "Truckin'" was a milestone, I'll say that. It taught us how to make meaningful art out of some pretty banal and mundane experience. We were busted in New Orleans [*in January 1970*], and that was that. So how are we going to turn that into something which is worthy of telling our grandkids rather than the experience on its own? We could somehow transform that into art which had meaning and purpose.

DENNIS McNALLY: If the band had stopped performing in late 1969 they would have gone down in history as this fascinating sort of odd aberration of a jazz-rock fusion band that was quite remarkable. But when they added the material from *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*... In a way it established the template that they followed for the next 20 years.

NED LAGIN: The scene we're describing around Mickey's ranch and around the Grateful Dead in 1970, it was a very open thing: there was a lot of sharing of different things, playing ideas, learning, experiencing. That disappeared by '74/'75. What we're talking about is a moment in time which wasn't perpetuated. A lot of things changed in those five years. Later on, everyone went in their own limousine, but in 1970 they would still play with other people; we all played and jammed all the time and hung out.

*A deluxe edition of **Workingman's Dead** is available now through Rhino. **American Beauty** follows soon. Particular thanks to Ned Lagin.*

www.nedlagin.com; www.tomconstanten.com; www.davidgrisman.com



John Dawson (second left) with New Riders Of The Purple Sage, 1975

"A GREAT BLESSING"

BOB MATTHEWS RECALLS HOW JOHN DAWSON "AND FRIEND" GAVE BIRTH TO NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE

BOB MATTHEWS: Jerry wanted to take on a new instrument, the pedal steel. New Riders Of The Purple Sage was an old friend of mine, John Dawson – Marmaduke – who had gone to the Peninsula School as I did.

Marmaduke started playing coffee houses, and very soon Jerry started showing up with his pedal steel to get chops. Pedal steel was a sign that something was changing in the Dead's music. He started playing with John before there was crossover. John let him sit in, and that went on until people started getting the idea that the "and friend" would be Jerry on pedal steel.

One day Jerry and I were at Pacific High; we had just finished the 16-track mixes of *Aoxomoxoa*. Jerry was packing up and I asked, "How's the pedal steel stuff with John going?" And he said, "It's doing great – in fact you're the bass player!" So I was the first bass player of the NRPS from May to September 1969.

That was a great blessing to me, because being involved in all these different aspects after years watching and listening, I got to play.

HEAR: NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE
New Riders Of The Purple Sage
COLUMBIA, 1971

★★★★

The one with Jerry on it The Burritos without the peril, the first NRPS album is a de rigueur country-rock text, with SF freak credentials. Jerry Garcia provides sprightly pedal steel, while Mickey Hart and Spencer Dryden are in the house too. Begins an epic career, which continues to this day.

GEMS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

GRATEFUL DEAD

AMERICAN BEAUTY

RELEASED NOVEMBER 1, 1970 (US); FEBRUARY 20, 1971 (UK)

Swept along by the song, Uncle John's Band takes an encore, finding mellow, melancholy beauty in a series of "diabolical bummers". *BY* BUD SCOPPA

HAVING discovered the joy of songcraft and vocal harmonies with *Workingman's Dead* – and connecting in a big way for the first time on record – the Dead doubled down. "The change has been noticeable to the record-buying public," Bob Weir pointed out to me early in 1971, sounding more like a record company marketing man than a hippie musician. But he then made clear that the transformation hadn't been commercially motivated. "We all decided that we liked to sing, because singing is a lot of fun, and we'd been glossing over it for a long time."

So, in August 1970, less than three months after the release of their first hit LP, the band eagerly headed into Studio C at Wally Heider Recorders in San Francisco to record the follow-up. Despite the telescoped time frame, they were armed with a wealth of new material. Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter were on a roll, cranking out one gem after another in the idyllic Larkspur house they shared, but Hunter had also begun co-writing productively with Weir and Phil Lesh. And now that they'd learned the value of concision, there'd be enough room on the LP for material from all the collaborative combinations.

Bob Matthews and Betty Cantor weren't available to produce, so the band rolled the dice with staff engineer Stephen Barncard, a relative newcomer. But there was little risk involved: Barncard had broken in at Heider as an assistant on the *Crosby, Stills & Nash* sessions before graduating to first engineer on CSNY's *Déjà Vu*, cut primarily right there in Studio C, where Garcia had supplied the joyous pedal-steel part for "Teach Your Children". Barncard was far from a Deadhead and hadn't listened to *Workingman's Dead*, but he'd heard stories from fellow engineers about the difficulties of working with the band, so he was relieved to find they'd spent time working up the new songs, focusing primarily on their three-part harmonies. Garcia, Weir and Lesh would never be compared to CSN, who'd inspired and encouraged them, but they'd tightened their blend considerably since *Workingman's Dead*.

While *Workingman's Dead* drew on the Cali country of Bakersfield, *American Beauty* was influenced by the band members' relocation from Haight-Ashbury to various scenic spots in Marin County, the Bay Area equivalent of Laurel Canyon. Hunter's lyrics, which confirmed his acknowledged obsession with the first two albums of The Band, were steeped in the colloquial language of American folk and country music, deepening the Dead's embrace of tradition, as they swapped their electric guitars for wooden instruments. It was a one-eighty from the acid-drenched improvisation that had set them apart from their contemporaries, and it brought Captain Trips full circle to his acoustic days in Dead forerunners like Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions.

The sylvan companion ballads "Box Of Rain", with co-writer Lesh singing lead and New Riders Of The Purple Sage's David Nelson supplying Clarence White-style B-bender guitar, and "Ripple", one of two tracks burnished by David Grisman's mandolin, lead off side one and two, the first setting the album's tone, the second sustaining it.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The best adjective I can think of to describe the Grateful Dead is "disarming"... Their method is to creep up on you and steal your head through a combination of musicality and sheer enjoyment... *American Beauty* is their sixth official album... and it shows off perhaps the most attractive side of their collective personality: the low-key, harmony singalong side with pretty, old-timey songs set to light acoustic backings... I never suspected they'd outshine *Workingman's Dead*, but they've done it, and here it is."

RICHARD WILLIAMS, MELODY MAKER, JANUARY 30, 1971

TRACKMARKS

1. Box Of Rain ★★★★★
2. Friend Of The Devil ★★★★
3. Sugar Magnolia ★★★★
4. Operator ★★
5. Candyman ★★★★
6. Ripple ★★★★★
7. Brokedown Palace ★★★★
8. Till The Morning Comes ★★★★
9. Attics Of My Life ★★★★
10. Truckin' ★★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Recorded at: Wally Heider Studios, San Francisco
Produced by: Grateful Dead; co-produced by Steve Barncard
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (gtr, pedal steel, piano, vocals), Mickey Hart (perc), Robert Hunter (lyrics), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Phil Lesh (bass, gtr, piano, vocals), Ron McKernan (harmonica, vocals on "Operator"), Bob Weir (gtr, vocals), David Grisman (mandolin on "Friend Of The Devil", "Ripple"), David Nelson (elec gtr on "Box Of Rain"), Ned Lagin (piano on "Candyman"), Dave Torbert (bass on "Box Of Rain"), Howard Wales (organ on "Candyman", "Truckin'"; piano on "Brokedown Palace")
Highest chart position: UK 25; US 30

Hunter and Garcia had written the haunted yet sprightly "Friend Of The Devil" for New Riders Of the Purple Sage, but it fit the vibe of *American Beauty* so well that they placed the track, with its disarmingly shambolic Garcia lead vocal, second in the album sequence. Weir makes his debut as lead vocalist on his lighthearted rocker "Sugar Magnolia", and he's such a natural that one wonders why it took them so long to feature him.

Indeed, *American Beauty* stands as the most democratic of Grateful Dead albums, so much so that the band made room for a contribution from the declining Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, who's barely present otherwise – his "Operator" is the lone weak link amid a range of enduringly catchy tracks. "Candyman", the longest cut on the LP at a languorous 6:14, and the Band-like "Brokedown Palace" – both featuring Garcia's pedal-steel accents – sandwich the crystalline "Ripple", forming the album's nostalgically mellow centre. The rollicking, harmony-infused country rocker "Till The Morning Comes", which foreshadows the Eagles' "Take It Easy", injects some dynamism into the album, while the baroque ballad "Attics Of My Life", which features the most pristine harmonies Garcia, Weir and Lesh would ever summon up, could be seen as the blueprint for Fleet Foxes four decades later.

Perhaps it's an indication of the band's ambivalence about playing the major-label game that they buried obvious single "Truckin'", a kissin' cousin of *Workingman's Dead* standout "Uncle John's Band", at the end of the record. On the other hand, this grabber,

AMERICAN BEAUTY STANDS AS THE MOST DEMOCRATIC DEAD ALBUM

a four-way collaboration with Weir handling lead vocals and leading the three-part harmonies in the choruses, makes for one hell of a payoff, its impact supercharged by the most indelible lyric lines in the Dead's vast canon: *"Sometimes the light's all shining on me/Other times I can barely see/Lately it occurs to me/What a long, strange trip it's been"*.

The ecstatic lift of "Truckin'" lightens the undertow of melancholy that pervades the album, the result of what Garcia described as "one diabolical bummer after another". Lesh co-wrote "Box Of Rain" while his father was dying of cancer; Garcia's mother died in September following an automobile accident; McKernan's worsening drinking problem would end his tenure with the band and lead to his death in 1973; and manager Lenny Hart, Mickey's father, had run off with a significant portion of the Dead's newfound wealth, putting his son on the sidelines for the next four years.

The music they were making helped them weather this series of storms, and the harmonies they'd worked so hard to tighten embodied the band members' determination to pull together during hard times. The Dead came out of this series of traumas with their most beloved studio album, packed with songs that would become enduring staples of their live repertoire. Garcia knew *American Beauty* was special even before the album's release. "It has some of the first things I've written, and that we've performed as a band," he said with a mixture of pride and wonder, "that in my opinion are genuinely beautiful." ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

GRATEFUL DEAD

RELEASED OCTOBER 24, 1971

Dead freaks unite! The Dead engage their onstage telepathy for a live set with attitude and the occasional breakdown. Also known as 'Skull Fuck'. *BY* JON DALE

THE Grateful Dead rolled into 1971 embracing their usual unusual. Ever mindful of the possibilities of psychological phenomena, in mid-February they collaborated in an ESP experiment with the Dream Laboratory at Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn – their audiences at their Capitol residency were asked to send ESP messages back to a sleeping subject at the medical centre. A neat metaphor for the telepathy in the Dead's inter-group dynamic, it also seems like a fairly appropriate way to kick off what would be one of the more important years in the Dead's history, one of both major changes and subtle but profound developments.

Their February stand at the Capitol was also drummer Mickey Hart's last – for now, at least. Increasingly despondent, he would retire back to his ranch for three years. Around this time, the fleeting Bob Weir/Robert Hunter writing relationship would falter, Weir taking one liberty too many with Hunter's words, and Weir would bring his friend (and sometime poet) John Barlow into the fold as a collaborator. The Dead also finally bought their own PA equipment, dubbed the Alembic PA, which meant bringing more members of the ever-growing Dead family on board. That was OK; everyone was dosed on the same drugs, mostly, and the touring party was just that: one gang and one groupmind crossing coast to coast.

The Dead also made plans to record a run of April shows, from which they would cherry-pick material for their next double live album. The resulting album, *Grateful Dead*, introduced a number of new songs to the Dead's recorded repertoire, many of which had been premiered at the Capitol – future classics like "Playing In The Band" and "Bertha" make their first appearance on vinyl here. Sheathed in iconic artwork from psychedelic poster-art specialist Alton Kelly, the album would come to be known, colloquially, as 'Skull & Roses'; originally, though, the Dead wanted to name the album 'Skull Fuck'. The record label was unimpressed and called the group in to discuss possibilities.

This convocation would become an object lesson in Dead democracy. "Any decision that concerned them had to involve everybody in the band," a record company executive recalled, "and their families were involved in the decision as well, and the other people associated with them. So, on that title, it was necessary to build a meeting with all of them here at the record company, but the record company's conference room wasn't big enough, because the Dead had brought 55 people."

The label would win, despite Garcia's argument that he'd be happy with minimal sales if the group could keep the title. "We did try," sighed drummer Bill Kreutzmann.

When the album landed, about half a year later, it felt like a consolidation, capturing the band in full flight across a number of originals and covers that told a story of the Dead as wayward songwriters and interpreters, who could draw the sweetest emotional resonance from the tales they were retelling, while playing together in near-telepathic formation. The set opens with "Bertha", an easy ride into view and one of Garcia's loveliest recent melodies, chiming and pliant guitars bedded down with huffing organ played by guest Merl Saunders, whose performances on three

CRITICS' VERDICT

"There isn't an original Grateful tune on side three. In fact, the second record is virtually tribute time. 'Wharf Rat' – opening side four – is a great track. A Garcia-Hunter composition, it increases the suspicion that this would have been an even better album had there been more Dead-penned tracks. It's the sort of record to make you wish the Dead played this country as regularly as some of the Stateside soul stars. But as they don't, it'll have to do to be going on with."
MELODY MAKER, NOVEMBER 13, 1971

TRACKMARKS

1. Bertha ★★★★
2. Mama Tried ★★★
3. Big Railroad Blues ★★★
4. Playing In The Band ★★★★
5. The Other One ★★★★
6. Me And My Uncle ★★★
7. Big Boss Man ★★★
8. Me And Bobby McGee ★★★★
9. Johnny B Goode ★★★
10. Wharf Rat ★★★★★
11. Not Fade Away/ Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad ★★★★

Label: Warner Bros
Recorded at: various locations, USA
Produced by: Grateful Dead with Betty Cantor and Bob Matthews
Players: Jerry Garcia (lead guitar, vocals), Bob Weir (rhythm guitar, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass, vocals), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (organ, harmonica, vocals), Merl Saunders (organ on "Bertha", "Playing In The Band", "Wharf Rat")
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 25

songs were overdubbed. The relatively pared-back lineup – a quintet, with Pigpen's keyboards receding into the background – meant that for the Grateful Dead, the listener was immersed in the stellar interplay of Garcia-Weir-Lesh-Kreutzmann: this is the closest the Dead had come, at the time, to sounding like a classic rock act.

Serviceable versions of Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried" and Noah Lewis's "Big Railroad Blues" followed; enjoyable, but nothing startling, the group comping along. It would take "Playing In The Band" to kick things back into action again, and while the version here lacks the clarity of Bob Weir's definitive studio version on his 1972 solo album *Ace*, it's a beautiful rendition, its pensive verses, pivoting on one chord, giving way to beautiful, circular curlicues of melancholy when the Dead start to stretch the song's boundaries. The other new Dead song debuted here, "Wharf Rat", is the album's highlight, with one of Garcia's most heartbreaking vocal deliveries strung across a lilting musical landscape.

"Wharf Rat" leads into the album's closer, a nine-minute jam on "Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad" and Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away". It's a reminder of what the Dead can do when their playing is truly accelerated, a febrile and feverish performance that makes good on Lester Bangs' surprised proclamation that the Grateful Dead were "a total personification of the American west both as musical genre and, more importantly, state of mind".

The flipside of this coin was their take on *Anthem Of The Sun*'s "The Other One", an

THE ALBUM DOCUMENTS A GROUP PLAYING AGAINST TIME

18-minute freefall, where Weir's song fragments land amidst a bustling, unpredictable stretch of improvisatory fervour. It's not all successful – the opening drum solo feels a bit unnecessary; there are moments of longueurs in the playing where you can hear things not quite cohering – but it's all strangely compelling.

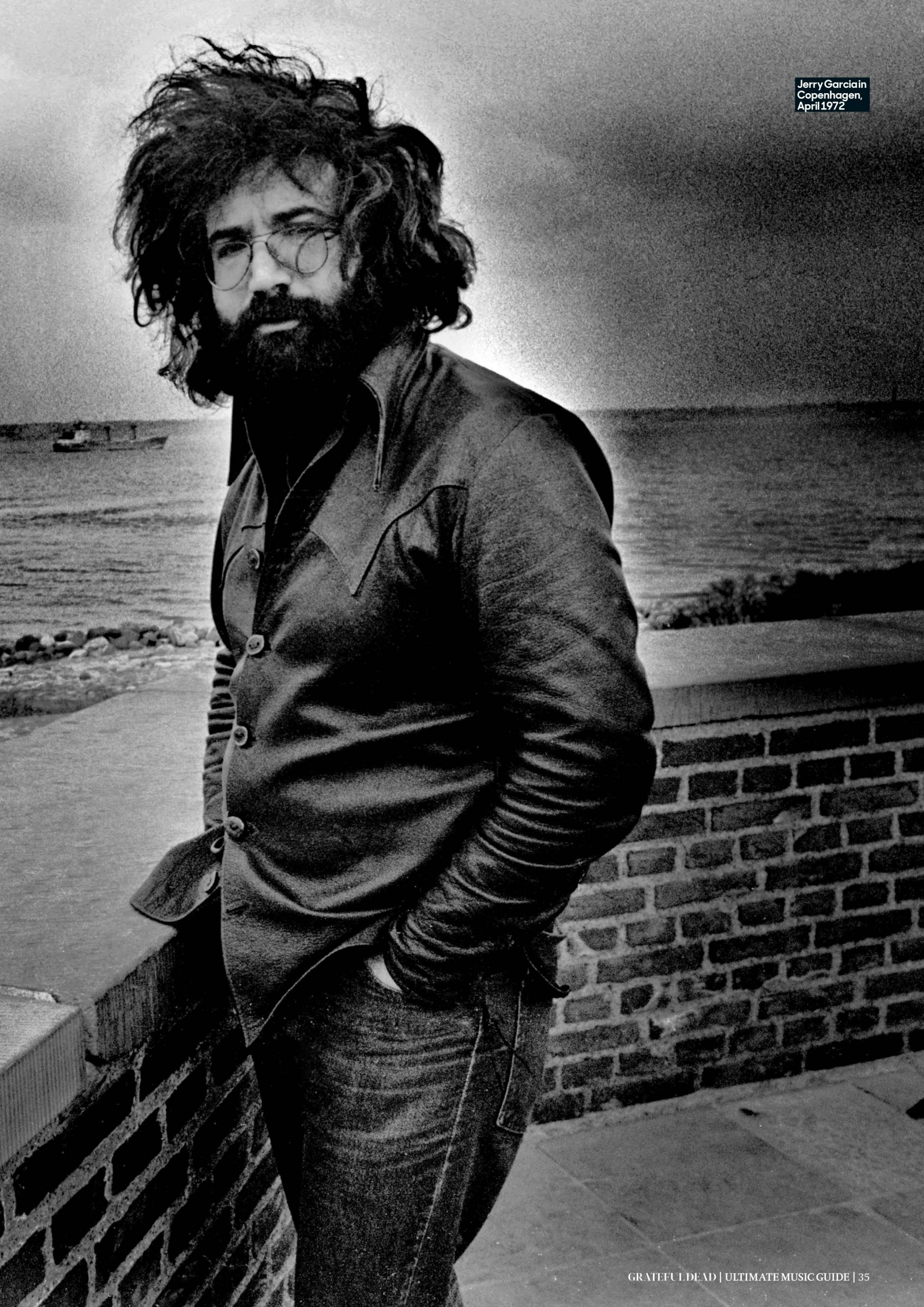
Including such an unpredictable take on "The Other One" was also a cogent reminder that the Dead were still Merry Pranksters and avant-freaksters, flipping the middle finger at the establishment. It's a perfect performance for an album that dedicated Deadheads would call nothing other than Skull Fuck. Phil Lesh summed it up with this pithy statement: "Skull Fuck is an attitude." But it's worth remembering, too, that the Dead's membership was in flux at this point – with Hart gone, Pigpen fading, and Keith and Donna Godchaux waiting in the wings, *Grateful Dead* documents a group playing against time, waiting for things to fall back into some semblance of 'place'.

Grateful Dead would become the Dead's first album to be certified gold for sales, and decades on, it remains a fan favourite. Certainly, it's a great glimpse into the Dead's alchemical live performances, while also stretching further the rapprochement of Dead-song and classic rock'n'roll, blues and country that they'd pretty much perfected on the previous year's *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*. But perhaps most importantly, *Grateful Dead* gave out the address for the Dead's newly formed fan club – "DEAD FREAKS UNITE: Who are you? Where are you? How are you?", the sleevenotes would proclaim. And from there, a whole other mythology was born... ●

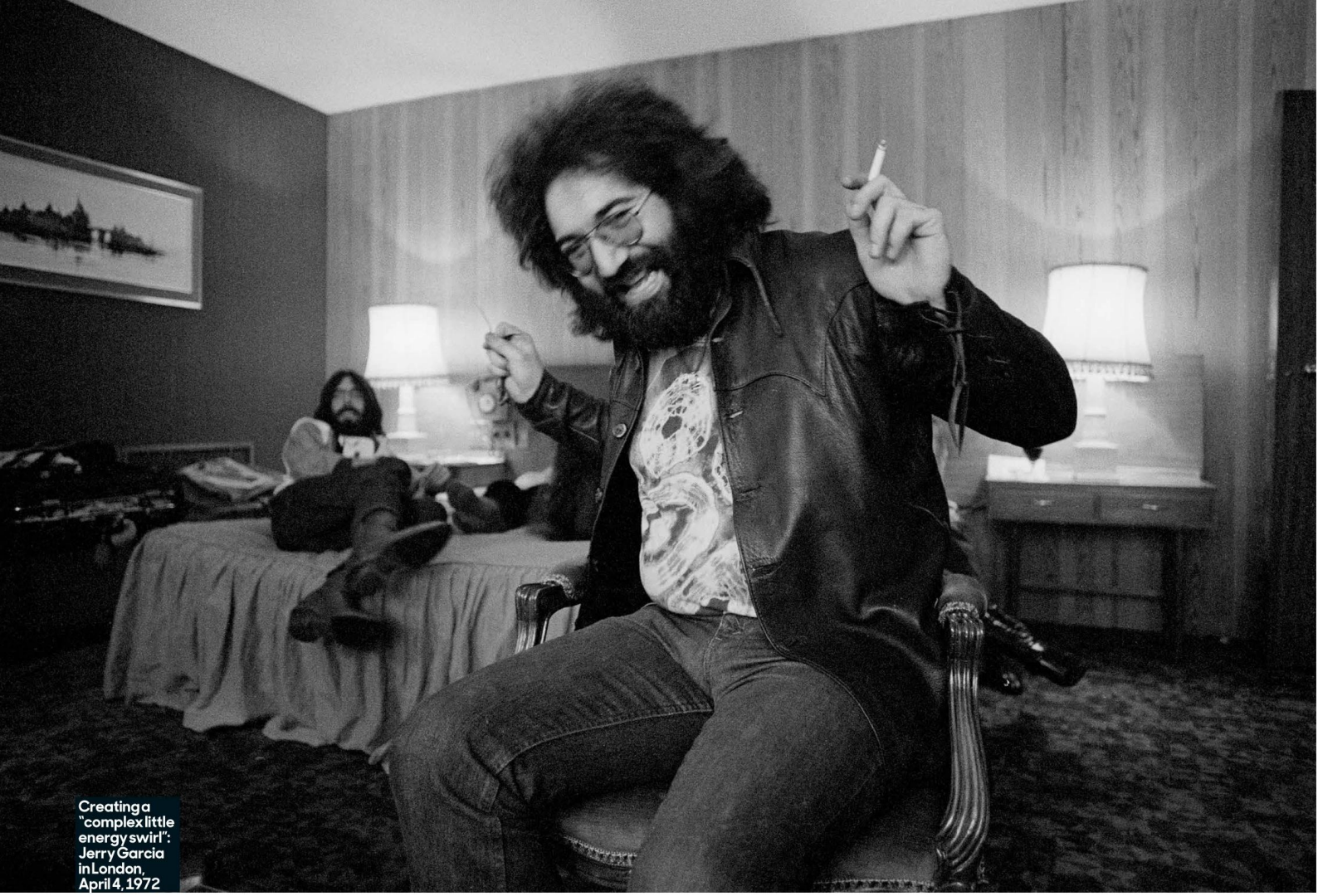
"The Dead are turning into a star band... and that's not what we want"

The Dead (and 43 friends) hit the road. In New York a press-shy JERRY GARCIA considers the pitfalls of popularity. Later, BOB WEIR discusses the blessing of KEITH GODCHAUX, and the '67 San Francisco scene: "It's history, it's blown over."

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS



Jerry Garcia in Copenhagen, April 1972



Creating a "complex little energy swirl": Jerry Garcia in London, April 4, 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

NME FEBRUARY 5, 1972

NATIONWIDE WEEKLY GIG GUIDE
MUSICAL EXPRESS
More music-reading than ever

JERRY GARCIA IS on the brink of becoming a much-lauded and yet reluctant celebrity, and when I confronted him backstage at the Academy of Music in New York some days ago he admitted to a distinct paranoia of being interviewed. He feels people will take more stock of his spoken word than his ability as a musician.

I therefore tried humour in a bid to break the initial ice. "I have come," I intoned, "on a big silver bird, across the mighty ocean from the electric island of fog and rain."

He smiled – lowered his protective defence – invited my good self up to his rather bleak second-floor dressing room, and there, in the company of tour manager Sam Cutler and Hooteroll-er Howard Wales, we enjoyed a lengthy informal chat.

Speaking for both himself and the Grateful Dead, Garcia endeavoured to explain his predicament: "As far as the Dead are concerned things are getting better and better. But at the same time they're getting worse and worse in the same direction.

"Unfortunately," he continued with a slight tinge of despair in his enthusiastic voice, "what's starting to happen in America is that the Dead are turning into a star band, and that's not what we want. That's essentially what we are desperately trying to avoid. But it's happening, so now we're faced with the problem of seeing if we can make it not happen.

"In the direction of more success there are more weird trips involved, which don't in any way help my paranoia about being interviewed. Really, it's all stuff like that I want to try and avoid. You see, people look towards me as the leader, for the simple reason that I talk a lot."

Garcia then offered a strange paradox. "If it is at all possible, we want to try and avoid becoming successful in the sense of being famous. The thing that we're trying to do is de-escalate that escalation thing."

> **"WE'RE TRYING TO DE-ESCALATE THAT ESCALATION THING"**
> JERRY GARCIA

The only way to maintain any kind of equilibrium is to avoid the pitfalls that beset other bands in their exposed position, says Garcia.

"If we, as a band, can get it together enough to be able to pull that kinda thing down to a reasonable pace, and pull ourselves out of the record competition popularity contest, then we'll be satisfied," he concluded with a grin.

Garcia feels that, as an individual, he isn't being forced into the overkill syndrome that plagues the like of Eric Clapton or Alvin Lee. "It's something quite different," the victim murmured.

"It's like the fact that you're interviewing me. Not because you've never heard of me, but because you have heard of me." He elaborated: "I've only agreed to do this interview because you're into what we play, and because I like you as a person as opposed to the media that you represent.

"I don't know what that means to you, but there's no other way that I can relate to it. But at the same time, when all this gets out into print somebody's going to look at it and then I'm going to have to deal with what that was.

"You see, man, it's just a complex little energy swirl that you and I are creating right now. I often wonder about it, because I have to end up relating to what I said a month ago."

Then, without pausing for a breath, Garcia burst out laughing as he added, "Luckily nobody takes it quite as seriously as I think... do they?" After deliberating on that particular question, Garcia conceded that for the reader it's interesting to read about but in the end it's the music that gets them off. "They'll read an interview once or twice, but hopefully they'll play an album a lot of times."

To the observer, the Grateful Dead are the definitive American rock band, the epitome of what could loosely be termed a self-reliant unit.

Garcia agrees in principle but states, "Whatever people think about the Grateful Dead is a huge misconception and we seem to spend all our energies patching up this misconception.

"We're only self-contained to a point, because we survive on the basis that there are a lot of people willing to support our trip by coming to our concerts and buying our albums."

Garcia then went on to give a brief rundown of the internal workings on the Grateful Dead's commune. "Our scene is that the band is like a locomotive. It's not solely the financial thing, because everyone connected with us works on that as well. Within our scene there are people involved in diverse and very worthwhile jobs that help contribute and make the whole thing work smoothly.

"The result is that it allows us to do what we do and hopefully everybody gets off in some way or another. But," he emphasised, "we're not people that make a lot of money and give it all away to other people. What the Dead has got is its very own little survival unit."

Though this method of close coexistence is geared to their own specific requirements, Garcia admits that he can't offer an opinion as to whether their modus operandi could apply to other bands.

"It's just like saying, will your shoes fit somebody else? I just don't know," was his conclusion. He offered an example. "We have these guys who do a lot of work for us like running our PA, and it just so happens that the head of that company is Bob Matthews who is also our recording engineer. They make professional equipment and fine instruments.

"It's experimental in that it's the first of anything, and as they seem to be the only people moving in that direction we're naturally trying to work in a completely compatible environment with them."

When asked how he would describe the Grateful Dead, Garcia grinned and uttered one word, "bums".

Explaining himself, he revealed, "The Dead's whole scene was past struggling, because when we originally came together we'd already given up, we didn't really care, that was our tradition. We said, fuck it, why struggle... why do anything. Fuck it all... Fuck everything."

It is because of this philosophy that Garcia feels that the Grateful Dead have at their own motivation managed to plod along and still maintain their sense of purpose.

With a wink, he added, "And the great thing is that we're still getting away with it." And with that statement, the very reluctant and very involuntary celebrity picked up his guitar and ambled on stage.

ROY CARR

NME APRIL 15, 1972

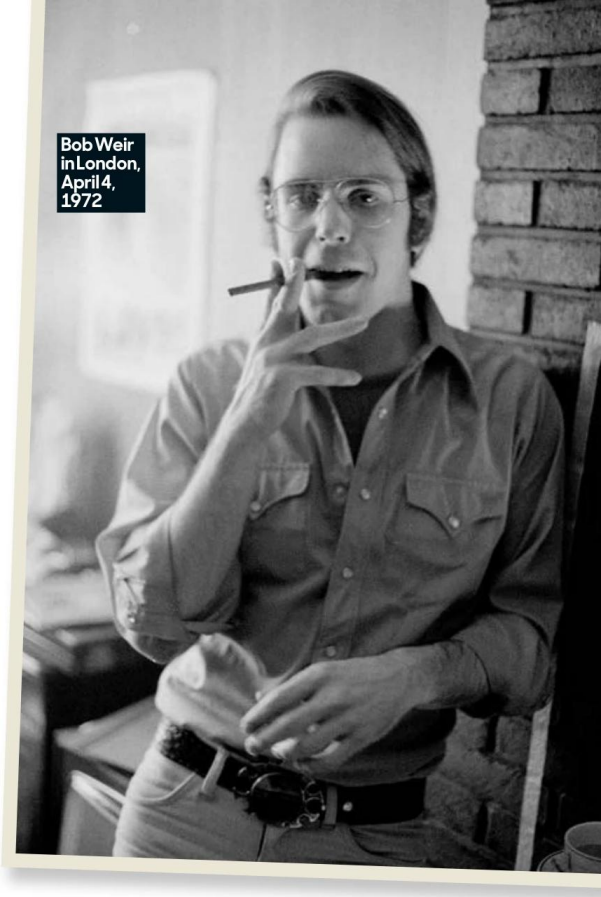
IT'S TAKEN a long time for the Dead to get themselves back over here. They probably made it more by good luck than good judgement. Their camp is as diverse and unpredictable as any under the sun – but there must be some sort of magical karma guarding them for they always seem to pull through.

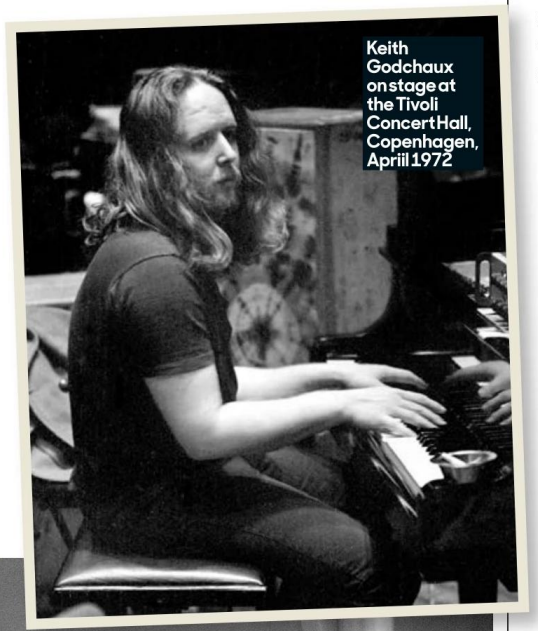
The Dead have brought a large family of 43 friends with them on this visit. And so it was hard to find a private corner at their hotel to speak to guitarist Bob Weir. But after settling down, we talked of Keith Godchaux, the new member, as well as the music and life of the Grateful Dead.

What was the reason for Keith coming in on keyboards?

WEIR: I think it happened like this. Pigpen got sick and we were about to do a tour, so we needed somebody. And just about that time, Garcia had met, and I think worked with, Keith in San Francisco.

We've always been looking for somebody, really. Pigpen's not really a virtuoso keyboard player – that's not exactly what he does with us.


Bob Weir in London, April 4, 1972


Keith Godchaux on stage at the Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen, April 1972

So Garcia suggested we give Keith a listen, and he sounded good to everybody, so we just worked him in.

It was a short notice, but he was incredibly adept. He picked up on everything fast. That was one indication of how it worked good, and another was how well he could pick up on feelings that we played.

I mean, he picked up on really minute, subtle differences. Every one of us was mind blown by how well he fitted into the whole musical scene we've conglomerated over the years.

When you first started you seemed to have a hard time putting down on record what you were all about. Are you more satisfied now?

It's getting better. As we learn what we can do in a studio, we start working with the studios in mind – rather than simply playing our music. And we're finding that we play different kinds of music for different situations. At first, we didn't know that you can gear to a studio. We're learning to do that a lot more now.

Looking back, do you consider yourself involved with the San Francisco scene any more?

Well, I more or less consider myself involved with the world, musically. There's a lot of cross-fertilisation among musicians in Marin County where we live. And I guess you could call it the San Francisco scene, because the nearest big city is San Francisco and we do most of our recording there. But there's no specifically localised thing that I consider myself a part of. Just music in general, really.

How do you feel about your name being mentioned synonymously with the 1967 San Francisco scene? That's what I meant really.

Well, it's history, it's blown over. It's not a reality to me. It used to be fun. I used to feel like a part ➤

Ron "Pigpen" McKernan in London, April 4, 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

Garcia and Weir on stage at Wembley Empire Pool, April 7, 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

of it. It was a flash – a good scene – but it went away. We're all a lot more mature now. We're all the same people and we're still all great friends, but we were kids having a party back then. Now, we're older kids doing something that older kids do. It's different.

There's a feeling among some people that the Grateful Dead are a social phenomenon. Do you think this detracts from your music?
If they start overlooking the music and delve into the social phenomenon we seem to be, then they're off on the wrong trip. As far as our social situation is concerned, we live in a straightforward way.

We like to get a lot of people involved in what we're doing and it seems to work out. So we have a lot of people working with us who we're responsible for feeding. But at the same time, they're responsible for helping us to push forward.

As far as any philosophy is concerned, any one of us can rap for hours about the way we feel. [*Garcia's particularly apt at it*]. But apparently, the more you talk, the more people consider you philosophic. Then you start getting into being a social phenomenon more than a musical one. It's just that people listen to whatever they hear, and if Garcia doesn't have a guitar in his hands, he'll rap. Any one of us does that.

Do you think music's going to remain the prime factor in so many people's lives? There is so much intensity and competition.
It's getting competitive. That means you must be either original or really good to survive. It's sure Darwinism I guess. Throughout history, there has never been an excess of really top musicians at any one time. But people have got to have music. Most everybody has to have it, and here we are to give it to them.

Rather than asking: is there life after death? I think a real good question is: is there music after death? I think a lot of people feel that way. Music represents a whole side of the human manifestation that we just can't live without. Nobody can live without it. Not even the Chinese.

> "PEOPLE HAVE TO HAVE MUSIC. NOBODY CAN LIVE WITHOUT IT"
> BOB WEIR

Do you play many dates in a year?
Well, I'll tell you somethin'. When we got here, all the people in that big country show [*the C&W festival at Wembley*] were here at the hotel. And I was talking to a lot of those guys and we were talking about how many nights a year they work. I was telling them we work 50 nights a year, and they were amazed because they work 150 to 200 nights a year and more. I got the hint that they thought we were really lazy and just laying back and making money off a big name.

Then it occurred to me to ask them how long they play every night... 45 minutes. Well, we play about three hours a night, so it works out to about the same. You can't carry on to 150 or 200 nights a year while playing three or four hours a night and expect to survive.

DANNY HOLLOWAY

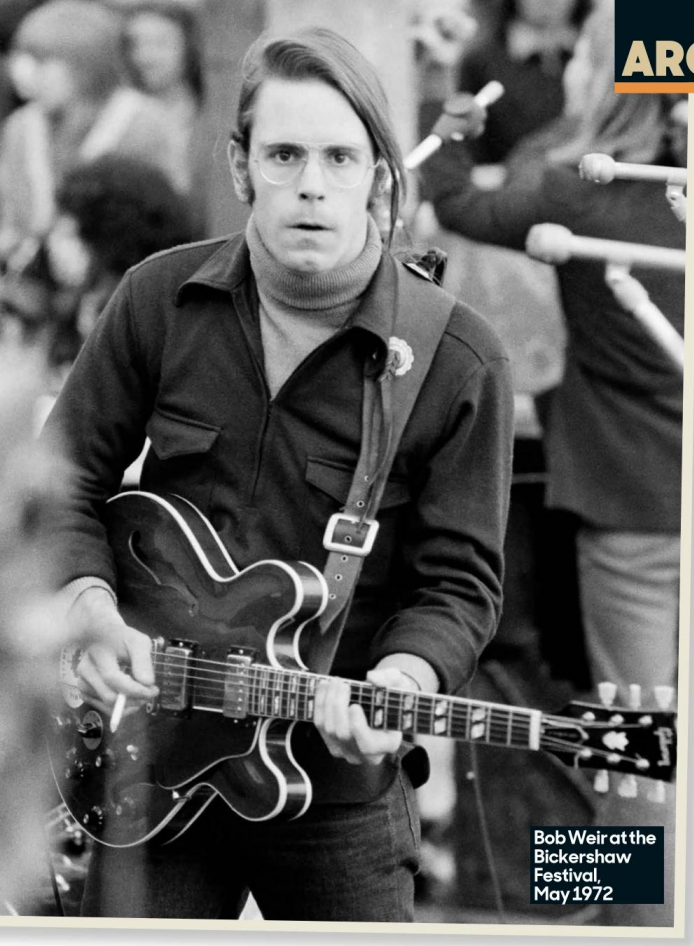
NME MAY 27, 1972

PERHAPS MORE THAN anything else the recent appearances of the Grateful Dead in this country at Wembley and Bickershaw [*festival*] and more currently the Lyceum, have served to illustrate just how significant and underrated is this powerful West Coast musical commune.

They are one of the few bands who are truly and brilliantly reflective of the times and experience through which they have passed since their emergence in San Francisco in 1966 at the height of flower-power-love and acid syndrome through to the more recent relaxed country style which has stemmed from Garcia's return to his jug-band roots.

The Dead were the first really definitive acid-rock band in the days when the stuff was still legal and their *Anthem For The Sun* album was considered to be virtually "The Tripper's Bedside Companion", but whatever freak attraction they might have had was underlined by the solid blues roots of their musicians and their intuitive feel.

You could tell just by listening to Garcia's guitar work that he had never had a lesson in his life but he knew how to listen and relate what he heard into his own style, which spawned little classics like "Viola Lee Blues".



Bob Weir at the Bickershaw Festival, May 1972

If this tour has done nothing else, it must have spurred a few people to go out and seek the Dead's albums both past, present and future. Some of their most recent and finest material has come from their live albums of course, and talking to guitarist Bob Weir shortly after the run across Europe on Monday he revealed why.

"I think we've all begun to feel that the group was becoming a little too clinical in the studio," he said. "There are certain obvious benefits to be derived from live recording once you can afford the cost of undertaking to tote the equipment around. [*The Dead currently have over seven tons of equipment with them to cope with that problem*].

"You get a little spark or inspiration on playing before the right audience at the right time which you might never achieve in a studio. This is the reason we have recorded all our concerts on this trip.

"I'd say the Wembley concert was probably the best we had done in this country – almost 80 per cent – up until the Lyceum. Bickershaw was something of a disappointment simply because of the frustration of playing in those conditions. The people were great – they were even determined to get off, wading around knee deep in mud and frozen in three days of rain, but it was all a bit forced.

"We had those huge Calor gas heaters on stage and they were not doing us any good either – the smell was getting to us and the heat was actually altering the molecular structure of the strings, causing us to go out of tune. I was pleased when they broke down and we were able to play in a naturally frozen condition.

"Perhaps one of the most satisfying things from our point of view on this trip had been the addition of our pianist Keith Godchaux – he has filled a gap in the band which always needed filling and we had almost given up hope of being able to.

"It might seem that he has a very natural and rhythmic feel which comes easy but in fact it is the result of a lot of work and intuitive play on his part.

"We auditioned scores of pianists before we found Keith and the fact that we finally managed to turn up someone who has fitted so well in the band is nothing short of miraculous to me. He was previously a session musician in San Francisco and before that he did a lot of session work in bars!"

With the Dead you can pick your style, country-blues or what they call "spaced music" of which "Dark Star" is a good example – they do them all well and their stage presentation is a good cross-section of all those influences. My own choice is "Ripple" off *American Beauty* and the *Workingman's Dead* album. You pays your money and takes your choice with the people's band.

Coming shortly at this theatre for your future enjoyment is Bob Weir's solo album *Ace* (an old nickname) on which he has written all the material himself with the assistance of lyricist John Barlow and Dave Torbert of the New Riders. String and brass arrangements an added attraction.

KEITH ALTHAM

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES; GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

The band backstage at the Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen, April 1972

GRATEFUL DEAD

EUROPE '72

RELEASED NOVEMBER 5, 1972

Can Europe get on the cosmic outlaw trip? It can – and is rewarded with a triple-live glimpse at the studio album that never was. BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

WHEN the Grateful Dead landed in London on April Fool's Day 1972 for their first European tour, audiences were not sure what to expect. The cosmic, acid-laced improvisations captured on *Live/Dead* had been followed by two albums of acoustic-based country-rock and a further live album on which they had played songs by Merle Haggard and Kris Kristofferson.

The drumming powerhouse had been sliced in half with the departure of Mickey Hart. Pigpen was ailing badly and had less than a year to live. His sickness had resulted in the arrival on keyboards of Keith Godchaux, who also brought with him his wife, Donna, as a backing singer, the first and only female member the band would ever boast.

After a three month lay-off – their first vacation in seven years – and then getting back in the swing with a seven-night run at New York's Academy of Music, the Dead arrived like an invading hippie army: a vast tribe 49 strong, 25 tons of equipment including their own sound system, a 16-track mobile studio and a bunch of new songs. "We've got a lot of brand new material that we've never recorded. That's why we're recording the tour," Garcia explained.

If the Dead seemed to be a band in transition, any doubts were dispelled on the first night of the tour. This reviewer had the privilege of being there as they transformed the drafty old Empire Pool in Wembley into a north London outpost of the Fillmore West – not a band in transition at all, but one that had fully entered the most fertile period of their career, still fired by acid dreams and an outlaw spirit but now capable of absorbing and transmuting every genre of vernacular American music into some of the most audacious and joyous rock'n'roll ever made.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"An 11-minute workout of 'Truckin'' strikes a few sparks, but a 13-minute 'Morning Dew' is painfully ponderous and slow. The pieces of Dead 'avant-garde freakout' placed in vacant positions on certain sides sound bland and pointless. The new songs aren't much better either. They're mostly 'laidback' country/rhythm'n'blues (throughout this set, the Dead seem incapable of playing hot-action rock'n'roll) Jerry Garcia/Bob Hunter compositions."
NICK KENT, NME, DECEMBER 9, 1972

I saw them twice more on the tour, a month later at a festival in a muddy field at Bickershaw, near Manchester, where they defied the elements to play a courageous five-hour set, and finally when they returned to London to sign off with a series of triumphant shows at the Lyceum. In all the years since I don't think I've ever seen any band perform with such an effortless fluidity.

Over the course of a two-month odyssey, the Dead played 23 concerts in five different countries plus a live set for Radio Luxembourg. What's more, every show was a unique experience. "We were the only band playing a different show every night and had that size of a repertoire that allowed us to do that," Bob Weir recalled more than four decades later. "There was a challenge for us, playing for people not familiar with what we were up to. But we were ready for fresh ears."

Recordings from eight of the shows made it onto the triple album that appeared five months after the tour had ended, by which time the band had polished some of the more ragged vocals in the studio and Merl Saunders had added some Hammond organ. If overdubbing live albums seems like cheating, the Dead at least did it with more elegance than most. According to Dennis McNally in the band's official history, *A Long Strange Trip*, the touching-up was "so

TRACKMARKS

1. Cumberland Blues ★★★
2. He's Gone ★★★★
3. One More Saturday Night ★★★
4. Jack Straw ★★★★
5. You Win Again ★★★
6. China Cat Sunflower ★★★★★
7. I Know You Rider ★★★★
8. Brown-Eyed Women ★★★★
9. It Hurts Me Too ★★★★
10. Ramble On Rose ★★★★
11. Sugar Magnolia ★★★★
12. Mr. Charlie ★★★
13. Tennessee Jed ★★★★
14. Truckin' ★★★★★
15. Epilogue ★★★★
16. Prelude ★★★★
17. Morning Dew ★★★★★

Label: Warner Brothers
Produced by: Grateful Dead
Recorded at: Empire Pool, London; Lyceum, London; Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; L'Olympia, Paris; Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (vocals, congas, organ), Keith Godchaux (piano), Donna Jean Godchaux (backing vocals), Merl Saunders (Hammond B3 overdubs)
Highest chart position: UK –; US 24

meticulous that they recreated the stage set-up in the studio to approximate the original ambience".

Of the 17 tracks, only "Cumberland Blues", "Sugar Magnolia" and "Truckin'" had appeared on a Dead studio album – and the latter is heard on *Europe '72* in very different form: the platform for a 13-minute kinetic jam that ventures into "Dark Star"'s cosmos. One further song, the raucous "One More Saturday Night", appeared in a studio version on Bob Weir's album *Ace*.

Given that the Dead failed to make a studio LP between 1970 and 1973, *Europe '72* serves not only as a memento of a legendary tour that saw the band at the height of their powers, but also offers a fascinating, if partial, snapshot of what might have been the Dead's great lost studio album.

The jewel in the crown of the new songs is "Jack Straw", a Weir/Hunter outlaw murder ballad with a wondrously loose-limbed rhythm that was subsequently played more than 450 times. Almost as good is "He's Gone", a loping and surprisingly generous song about former manager Lenny Hart (father of Mickey), who high-tailed it to Mexico with $150,000 of the band's money, sung by Garcia with an "aw shucks, it's only bread, man" insouciance.

It's one of a quartet of Garcia/Hunter songs that were never recorded in the studio, along with the delightful ragtime-tinted "Ramble On Rose", the elegiac "Brown-Eyed Woman" and the timeless shuffle of "Tennessee Jed" with its descending motif and wordless bridge.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE DEAD'S GREAT LOST STUDIO ALBUM

Pigpen, who would only play one more show after the European tour, makes his swansong with "Mr Charlie", a swamp-funk delight that you could imagine Dr John singing, and the set list is topped out with four covers, each of which seems to display a different side of the Dead's multi-faceted musical personality. The slow, rolling blues of Elmore James' "It Hurts Me Too" is deathlessly played, but Pigpen's ponderous vocal and harmonica betray the sad reality that he was coming towards the end. "I Know You Rider" is a vehicle for the rough-hewn harmonies the band had essayed on *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, and Hank Williams' "You Win Again" finds the Dead in honky-tonk heaven.

Best of the covers, though, is a crystalline "Morning Dew", which emerges out of an avant-garde psych-noise jam simply titled "Prelude". Recorded on the final night of the tour at the Lyceum and taking up side six of the original vinyl album, the two pieces constitute a 20-minute tour de force that serves as celebration of a triumphant trip imbued with the sweet anticipation of finally going home.

"There is nothing like a Grateful Dead concert," the album liner notes remarked with epic understatement. What stands out is how invigoratingly fresh and full of wonder *Europe '72* still sounds, combining breathtaking flights of improvisational fantasy with exquisite songcraft on a freewheeling trip down the highway of cosmic American music, with its own stash of in-built natural highs. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

WAKE OF THE FLOOD

RELEASED OCTOBER 15, 1973

"*Keep the mother rollin'*..." Death. Bootlegging. The cops. Still, extracurricular dramas can't fully intrude into a set of some of the Dead's finest songs. BY JOHN ROBINSON

BEGINNING, as it does, with the gentle old-timey grooves of "Mississippi Half Step Uptown Toodeloo" (never mind a song actually called that), it's hard to credit that there might be troubling stuff going on behind the scenes of the Grateful Dead's sixth studio album. But both inside and outside the record, there were bad omens: hoping for equanimity, the album's songs generally suggested forbearance. Conceived amid turbulence, it concluded with a subplot more Netflix drama than hippie dream.

In the meantime, *Wake Of The Flood* marked the band's return to the studio for the first time in three years. Much as the commercial breakthrough of *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, their two albums of 1970, had restored record company confidence and opened them up to a wider audience, their stability was threatened by a number of unforeseen issues. After his dad (fleetingly a Grateful Dead manager) defrauded the band of $150,000 and eloped with a bank clerk, Mickey Hart had left the band. The band's entourage-heavy European tour of 1972 had dented their coffers. The increasingly infirm Pigpen, meanwhile, long the band's vibes pilot, died in March 1973, shortly before the sessions.

Amid this confusion, the band expanded. On stage, they were joined by pianist Keith Godchaux (who contributes the pleasantly mellow "Let Me Sing Your Blues Away" here) and his wife, Donna Jean, an able singer. Off it, their business horizons widened too. Rolling Stones tour manager Sam Cutler brought a hard-nosed professionalism to their day-to-day dealings. Having seen that they could retain a larger portion of their destiny if they controlled the means of production, the band – mainly steered by Garcia – launched Grateful Dead Records. Its logo: a contemplative skeleton jester.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The overall impression is one of profound disappointment... the Dead's studio albums bear little relation to what they do live. Therefore *Wake Of The Flood* serves as a pace-setter, an indication of what is to come... So what are the trends? First it sees a move into the ponderous, trudging style of The Band, typified by 'Row Jimmy', a song which could easily have come from *Music From Big Pink*... The other trend is towards nostalgia... typified by the opening cut 'Mississippi Half Step...'. Make the next one a live one, lads."
MICHAEL OLDFIELD, MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 20, 1973

All of which drama forms a counterpoint to a record that contains some of the band's most restorative messaging, alongside sustained passages of great musical beauty. Robert Hunter, whose contributions to the band's two 1970 albums had embedded them in a rich vein of Americana, now embraced a wider spiritual outlook: man lashed by the elements in a hail of poor gambling decisions, but ultimately still staying afloat. Not to be outdone amid all this elemental business, Bob Weir began to offer work written with lyricist John Perry Barlow, whose lexicon of plough strokes, sunshine and healthy bushels seemed a logical extension of his day job: sometime cattle rancher.

The pace of the album is sedate but, as the band seem to qualify in "Row Jimmy", the first of a couple of stone classics in the middle of the album, it's "*not too fast and not too slow*". Nor would you want to rush through this sumptuous terrain. If the listener were to be dipping a toe into the Dead for the first time with *Wake Of The Flood* after a spell enjoying the spacious sound field of, say, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* (released six months earlier), they would not have been disappointed to be met by Keith Godchaux's wide expanses of Hammond organ, and the gentle fatalism of lyrics like: "*You ain't got half of what you thought you had...*"

"Row Jimmy", slow and even slightly reggae, introduces a trio of songs that seem of a piece with other truly great and somewhat mystical rock anthems of the period. Jerry Garcia will shine on guitar as this album develops, but it's his singing that is the revelation, as he presents as vulnerable but abiding. "Stella Blue" is the Grateful Dead's social experiment enacted

TRACKMARKS

1. Mississippi Half Step Uptown Toodeloo ★★★
2. Let Me Sing Your Blues Away ★★★
3. Row Jimmy ★★★★
4. Stella Blue ★★★★★
5. Here Comes Sunshine ★★★★★
6. Eyes Of The World ★★★★
7. Weather Report Suite ★★★★

Producer: Grateful Dead
Recorded: Record Plant, Sausalito
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass), Donna Jean Godchaux (vocals), Keith Godchaux (keyboards), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Bill Atwood (trumpet), Vassar Clements (violin), Joe Ellis (trumpet), Sarah Fulcher (vocals), Matthew Kelly (harmonica), Frank Morin (sax), Pat O'Hara (trombone), Doug Sahm (bajo sexto), Benny Velarde (timbales)
Highest chart position: UK DNC; US 18

in song form, always on the point of unspooling but miraculously holding together; melancholic but wise; a "Stairway To Heaven", without need of heaviness or hedgerow.

The lovely "Here Comes Sunshine" marks the arrival of spring to the album's seasonal cycle with a song hatched precisely between *Abbey Road* and "Hot Burrito #2". It's a warming glow that now bathes the remainder of the record, a song from which the album takes its title and cautiously optimistic tone: in spite of everything, let's get out there and pan in the water for the good times. As with many Grateful Dead songs that are more familiar from live tapes, "Eyes Of The World" sounds a little slight and lacking in punch, but the studio production does at least accord perfect space to Garcia's playing, a shower of mellow darts.

The album's golden tones expand in a bucolic fashion as we enter the courtly folk epic of Bob Weir's "Weather Report Suite". Another song to germinate in a field of Hammond organ, the suite seems to start at the end, with a restful gospel section. The second part ("Let It Grow") is as jaunty as a farmyard scene. As Weir extols the virtues of a woman whose back is browned by the sun, the English folk technicalities of the first part are displaced by cantina vibes and upbeat brass. Were this a movie scene, someone would be running across the screen in pursuit of a chicken.

As we will find on later records like *Terrapin Station*, a movement is being made to articulate the freedoms of improvisation in written-through compositions. You might view it as an acknowledgement of developments elsewhere in the world in prog rock, or an oblique respect for keeping things businesslike. It would expand live, but the demo of "Weather Report" was within 10 seconds of being the same length of the recorded version.

THE PACE IS SEDATE: "NOT TOO FAST AND NOT TOO SLOW"

Outside the record, a similar streamlining was in principle under way. On the inner gatefold of the 1971 *Grateful Dead* album, the call had gone out to "Dead Freaks" to write to the band. Correspondents in return received irregular newsletters with musings by Robert Hunter and drawings by Jerry Garcia. As the band started their new label, this list of hippies with envelopes was now, to Hunter's outrage, formalised by the label manager at Grateful Dead Records as a mail marketing list.

Their ambitions moved them forwards; old-school hassles held them back. And none were more old school than the mob. Possibly perceiving the band's commercial heft to be in advance of what it was, *Wake...* was swiftly bootlegged, much to the dismay of the newly independent band. Through their list, they now sent out a missive to Dead Freaks asking them to look out for counterfeits (white, not orange writing on the spine; no round corners on the sticker), and to report back to them.

The crime was serious, but so was the irony. Having turned their own freaks into cops, with their income threatened, the band were then forced to place a call to that notorious friend of the counterculture: the FBI. The warm vibe of their record was starting to feel utterly at odds with the mercantile realities outside it.

As the 1970s progressed, this would actively work in the band's favour, as their music became a refuge for its audience from the realities of their lives in the real world. For the time being, the bootleggers remained uncaught. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

FROM THE MARS HOTEL

RELEASED JUNE 27, 1974

Hunkered down in a fearful San Francisco, the Dead go in search of a lifeline hit. They find it, along the way making a valuable reconnection with their roots. BY PAUL MOODY

AS 1973 morphed into 1974, the Grateful Dead appeared to be in rude health. The Top 20 chart success of *Wake Of The Flood* had seen the band clear lingering debts accrued on their Europe '72 tour, while following their appearance at the Summer Jam at Watkins Glen in July 1973 in front of an estimated audience of 600,000, demand for their live shows had gone through the roof. In March 1974 alone, they made a profit of $326,000 from concert performances, band earnings and record sales – the last despite widespread bootlegging. With 40,000 loyal Deadheads signed up to receive news about releases on their newly formed label, they even sent a letter to fans floating the idea of selling their records outside shows via customised ice-cream trucks.

However, a series of meetings at their headquarters at 1016 Lincoln Avenue, San Rafael, in the early months of 1974 soon presented a more sobering reality. With outgoings spiralling because of the monthly wage bill for their 300-plus employees and the expense of their brand-new, state-of-the-art Wall Of Sound stage system – which had cost $300,000 to build and needed $100,000 a month to maintain – the Dead quickly concluded that they needed to make another album, and fast.

Accordingly, in March 1974, after a solid month of rehearsals working through a stockpile of songs left over from sessions for *Wake Of The Flood*, they entered CBS Studios on Folsom Street, San Francisco with in-house engineer Roy Segal, a veteran of sessions with fastidious hit-makers Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Mars Hotel*... is a milestone in the Dead's career: it's the first time they've tried to put all the diverse influences they've absorbed on to one single record. The result is possibly the finest American rock album to come out this year... For *Mars Hotel* is an amalgamation of all the new US rock bands – from the Allman Brothers to Steely Dan, Mahavishnu to the Doobie Brothers – made with such style that even the collective musical experience of the Knebworth bill could scarcely equal it."
MICHAEL OLDFIELD, MELODY MAKER, JULY 20, 1974

Beginning each day at 1pm – admittedly after a full lunch with wine – the band set to work, using cocaine to maintain their focus as the evenings wore on. "It was more serious, it wasn't just hanging," recalled Grateful Dead Records employee Steve Brown. "They buckled down to get a hit album." Between takes they would head upstairs to the offices of film director Francis Ford Coppola's company American Zoetrope, where they would hear hair-raising tales about preparations for his forthcoming film, *Apocalypse Now*.

The evening sessions, meanwhile, took place in a city cloaked in an eerie silence. With San Francisco gripped with fear owing to the notorious Zebra murders – a racially motivated group of serial killers who claimed at least 15 lives between October 1973 and April '74 – the city was largely deserted after sunset. "People were terrified to walk the streets at night," recalled Bill Kreutzmann in his autobiography. "I remember hearing sirens constantly wailing in the distance as I crossed the Golden Gate Bridge, heading downtown to work."

With nightly news broadcasts covering the ongoing Watergate scandal and the nightmarish realities of the Vietnam War, America felt like a country experiencing a collective identity crisis.

Released on June 27, 1974, less than a year after its predecessor, *From The Mars Hotel* mirrors this turbulent national mood. Written by Garcia with lyrics by Robert

GRATEFUL DEAD FROM THE MARS HOTEL

TRACKMARKS

1. US Blues ★★★
2. China Doll ★★★
3. Unbroken Chain ★★★★
4. Loose Lucy ★★★
5. Scarlet Begonias ★★★★
6. Pride Of Cucamonga ★★★
7. Money Money ★★★
8. Ship Of Fools ★★★★★

Label: Grateful Dead
Producer: Grateful Dead
Recorded: CBS Studios, San Francisco
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (lead guitar), Donna Jean Godchaux (vocals), Keith Godchaux (keyboards, vocals), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Phil Lesh (bass guitar), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Ned Lagin (synthesisers), John McFee (pedal- steel guitar)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 16

Hunter, barn-burning opener "US Blues" sets the mood. Road-tested live over the course of 1973 as "Wave That Flag", it namechecks cultural figureheads ranging from Charlie Chan to Uncle Sam and PT Barnum, while questioning America's place in the world in lines such as: "*We're all confused, what's to lose?*" The despondent mood continues in the haunting "China Doll", a Garcia-Hunter composition relating a conversation between a suicide victim and a friend coming to terms with their loss. It's as unsettling as it is beautiful, set to a muted backdrop of harpsichord and plucked Spanish guitar.

The emotional heartstrings are given a further tug by the spun gold of "Unbroken Chain". Written by Phil Lesh – with a cryptic lyric by Bobby Petersen – its constantly shifting 6:45 duration would come to symbolise the unbreakable bond between the Dead and their audience. Famously absent from the band's live set until 1995, it's a cosmic nod to their shared freak-flag spirit, bound up in "*the sky and sea*" and "*the western wind*", "*listening for the secret, searching for the sound*".

There's a similarly inclusive feel to Weir's honky-tonk strut "Loose Lucy", before "Scarlet Begonias" raises the bar once more. Written only a month before recording, it captures Hunter and Garcia in perfect harmony, the former's sage-like lyric – ostensibly about seeing a pretty girl outside the US Embassy in London – exploring themes of innocence, desire and regret ("*Once in a while you get shown the light in the strangest of places if you look at it right*") over a supremely funky backdrop.

> "UNBROKEN CHAIN" IS A COSMIC NOD TO A SHARED FREAK-FLAG SPIRIT

"Pride Of Cucamonga" is similarly free-spirited, a pedal-steel-driven ode to the Beat way of life, named after a then popular jug wine. It's followed by "Money Money", a driving Bob Weir rocker informed by Barrett Strong's Motown classic where he lets off steam in stone(d)-age fashion: "*Lord made a lady out of Adam's rib/ Next thing you know, you got Women's Lib.*"

Neither, however, prepares you for epic finale "Ship Of Fools". With Hunter's despairing lyric perfectly matched by Garcia's world-weary vocal and Keith Godchaux's gospel-infused organ part, the song addresses the failings of Richard Nixon's government, using the metaphor of a ship and crew heading for certain disaster – "*Don't lend your hand/To raise no flag/To top no ship of fools.*" Memorably covered by Elvis Costello on 1991 Dead tribute album *Deadicated*, it's a song for the ages, and one which, by reprising the theme of "US Blues", brings the record full circle.

This overriding sense of alienation was made explicit in the album's title. Taken from a derelict boarding house close to the studio once frequented by Beat icon Jack Kerouac, it told the band's audience that, for all their success, the Dead's countercultural credentials remained intact. America might have been on its knees, but *From The Mars Hotel* proved that the Grateful Dead were still very much open for business. ●

"All I wanna do is play": Jerry Garcia

"We haven't gained any degree of respectability"

Dogged by karma, the GRATEFUL DEAD and their supernova sound system arrive at London's Alexandra Palace. Why do they tape everything? How do they manage onstage bladder control? And what's with the albums? "Our records are awful," GARCIA tells Charles Shaar Murray. "I'm embarrassed on many levels."

JOESTEVENS

On stage at Alexandra Palace, September 1974

JOESTEVENS

NME SEPTEMBER 21, 1974

IT'S DA Dead, mayun! Everybody's bloody grinning.

The roadies who're running around Alexandra Palace launching frisbees into the stratosphere, the ones who're plugging things in and carrying things about, the Old Ladies'n'Wives trucking around with their kids...

Everybody is grinning.

Jerry Garcia is grinning as well, wandering around in circles on the stage with his guitar tuned right in on the intergalactic noodle wavelength and a seraphic grin plastered over his mug.

His fingers trucking along busily like the game little troupers they are, he listens with his head on one side to the almost imperceptible sound of his beard growing.

A week ago he only had stubble.

Now he's sporting a Full-Fledged Growth. They don't call him the Fastest Beard In The West for nothing.

What's da story, Jerry?

Wellllllll, the story is that Jerry Garcia is standing in front of a scale model of the Great Wall Of China playing his geetar. There's a bit of Kozmic Ragtime, some patented repeat-echo doodlerama... and what a lovely smile. The Osmonds should be so lucky as to be able to smile with the warm, friendly sincerity of the Grateful Dead and their crew. Why they weren't signed up for a Coke commercial hasta be one of the best-kept secrets of all time.

I mean, here's just one example – just one – of how thoroughly, overwhelmingly wonderful the Dead are. Are you ready for this?

It seems that at the Watkins Glen Festival (which out-statisticked Woodstock by 150,000 folks) the Dead set up speaker towers geometrically proceeding into the audience, complete with a delay system to keep it all in phase, so that even if you were one helluva way back you could still get good sound.

And – here's the killer part – they wired a goddam radio transmitter into the sound system so that all the people stuck out in the traffic jams could hear on their itty-bitty car radios.

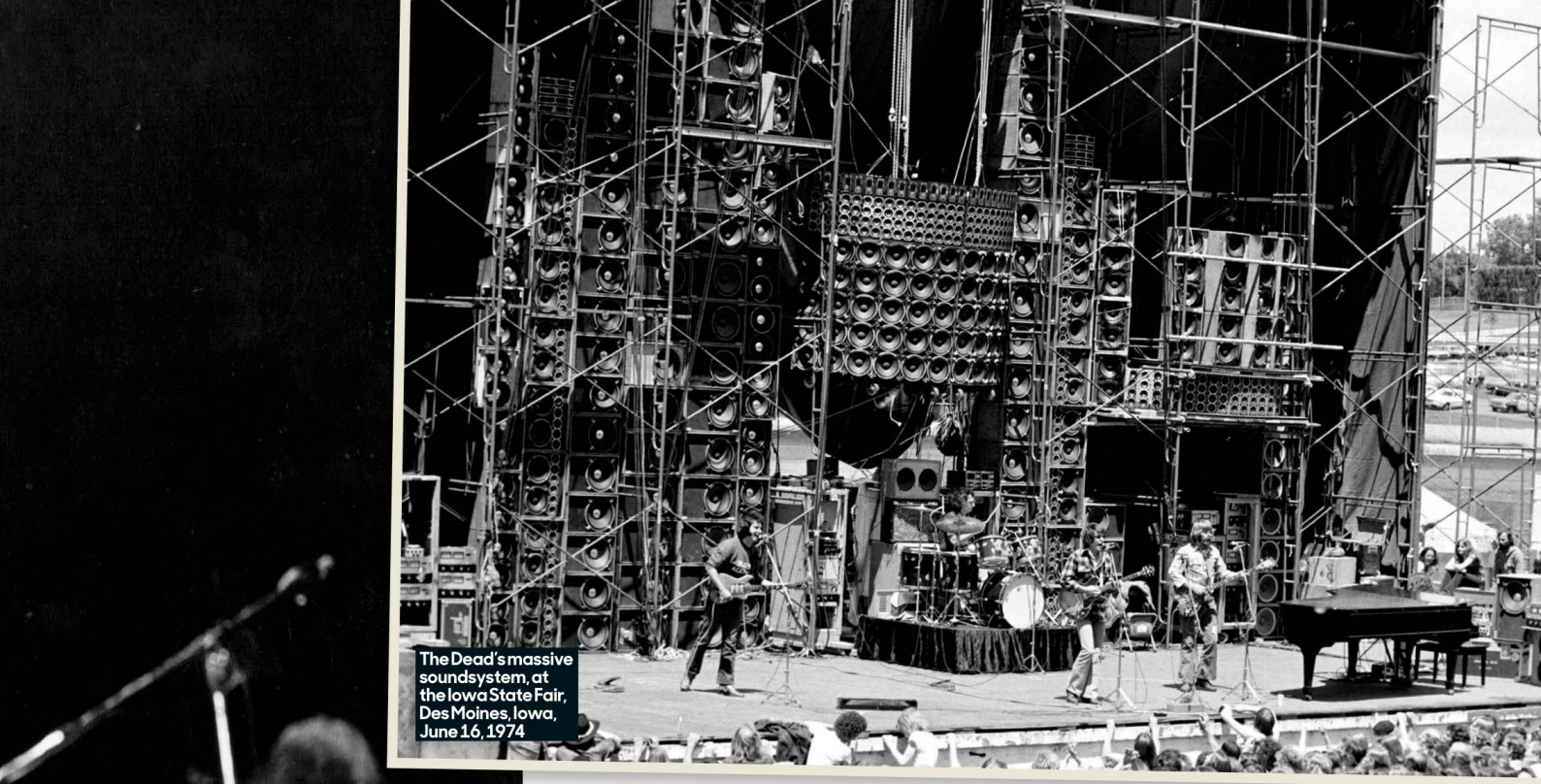
Now, ain't that sump'n? Would you get ELP doing that? Would you get the Faces doing that? Wouldja? Wouldja, huh?

So Uncle Jerry stashes his axe and, still grinning through his chin-warmer, saunters backstage to a room full of impressive-looking electronic devices. On the previous night, some extremely agile thieves had descended through an air vent and ripped off a tape deck.

"It's basically what we get for starting late," beams Garcia. "That's the karma – the starting-late karma."

A philosopher, yet!

OK, Jerry, let's do the interview. There's one real insider's Grateful Dead question, the real heavy secret that we've all wanted to know for the last



The Dead's massive soundsystem, at the Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Iowa, June 16, 1974

seven years, which is – how the hell do ya manage to play them long sets without needing to slink off and take a leak?

Is it some form of esoteric yoga bladder control that you learned from Ken Kesey? Do you have tubes strapped under your jeans? What's the deal?

"Hahaaa. There isn't any real secret, I don't think... and I'm also not a beer-drinker, which probably makes a big difference. I haven't really thought about that before" – something goes click, Garcia's brain revolves 180 degrees and he feeds in another punch card – "There are times when somebody will leave the stage for some reason or other... It just doesn't seem like it.

"We don't really do five hours directly. Like we'll play an hour and a half or so, and then come back. Makes the whole thing more reasonable. Hahaaa."

"When you went off last night, I walked out into the crowd," volunteers a member of the road crew, "an' a lotta people thought you were putting them on a hype trip."

Garcia nods a couple of times, inserts an untipped Camel into his smile. "I can't understand why they would think that. They might think that that was where the band was at. I'm on a self-destruction programme," he says, alluding to the untipped cigarette. No filter tip's gonna come between you and that ol' debbil cancer, right, Jerry?

"Maybe. Hahaaa. Death has a better than fair chance anyway. Like tooth decay."

Ye-e-ah... mighty fine lookin' PA system you got there, Jerry.

"The reason that we have it and the reason that we developed it 'n all that is that we weren't really anticipating an amazing growth in our audience, which has happened, and so in terms of – uh – respecting the situation and trying to deal with it righteously, our point of view has been, well, since we're playing to larger audiences in larger places, the thing to do should be to divert the energy into improving the quality of the performance.

"Obviously, the bigger the place, the worse the sound."

Yeah, but Jerry, that problem exists for lotsa bands...

"Yeah, but not that many acts are concerned about it."

Oh.

"It's a problem of individual responsibility. If the musicians feel very strongly about it, then it's up to them to do something about it.

"The economics of rock'n'roll don't allow for trying to get a better and better sound, since the idea is to cut down on expenses. Our motive is simply a sense of responsibility about what it is. When you're playing in a big room, there's no way to – uh – de-escalate."

So that's why you play all those club gigs in your spare time, huh, Jerry?

"Oh, I do those 'cuz I'm a musician. I'm a player. The thing I want to do most is to play. I wanna learn how to play better, and the only way you can do that is to play."

Hey, Jerry... didja hear about Windsor? Bummer, man. Bad vibes, y'know?

"We've seen it happen in the United States... time and time again. It's almost at the point now where you can describe music as an illegal activity in terms of the free equation. Woodstock and Altamont and all the other large-scale things that were characterised by a certain amount of confusion or violence have all produced a new level of paranoia. We still get busted a lot.

"Basically we're outlaws. We're viewed as outlaws, and we've developed outlaw-style protective colouration. We're not immune, by any means. We haven't gained any degree of respectability."

Well, you could play it like the Allmans and get a dude from the diplomatic ➤

KIRK WEST/GETTY IMAGES

Weir and Garcia, Alexandra Palace, September 1974

MICK GOLD/REDFERNS

corps to waltz you through customs...

"Yeah. Hahaaaa. Screw it, I'd rather take my chances. I don't like to feel that I'm existing on that level. That's not who I am at all. I don't like any of the trappings of success at all. They're all poison. It's hard enough just playin', and that's all I wanna do."

In that case, does it hang ya up to be a guru 'n a "signpost to new space" and all the rest of that Charles Reich aardvaark waste?

"It could, but... I don't deal with my public image. I regret having ever spoken to anyone... haHAAA-ah... but I feel that as long as I have... I have a kinda responsibility to follow it up and clarify it as much as I can.

"The difficulty is that my viewpoint is not static. My mind is dynamic and my thoughts are changing and my ideas are changing. I'm embarrassed by that book [*Garcia: A Signpost To New Space by Charles Reich and Jann Wenner*], I'm embarrassed by seeing my name in print, I'm embarrassed by having to be out on stage, I'm embarrassed... on many levels."

Whoooo-ee. It's amazing that Garcia can even bring himself to walk out of his house in the morning.

"I really just love to play, y'know? I love to play without having to be – uh – fulfilling this human drama aspect of – uh – whatever it is."

Jerry Garcia is really such a nice old hippie that I felt kinda bad about talking to him under false pretences. I mean, I saw the Dead two years ago at Wembley and they were great, but I've never been able to get off at all on their records. So I said just that.

"Ye-e-ahh – our records are awful."

Huh??????

"We've never bothered too much, y'know?

> **"WE'RE IN A SCHEMING BAG. WE CAN MAKE ANY CRAZY PLANS WE WANT TO"**
>
> JERRY GARCIA

HaHAAAA-haah! I don't think that recording is a suitable form for us. The live thing is what we do."

Well, if we're all agreed that the Dead's records just don't cut it, doesn't that make them a bit of a rip-off, something of a burn?

"That's exactly it. Haahaaa-ha!! It's a burn for us and for the public, too. We've never really made money from records. Our records have always like sold to a small, closed audience. We've never scored big from records. We've always spent more making them than we've made back... or some other permutation of unsuccessful possibility.

"A lot of people come to see us, but don't buy our records. There's a whole big scene of people who do nothing but swap live tapes of us – for free! That's a heavier trip than records, y'know?"

Has having your own label made any difference on that level?

"Yes, it's made it possible for us to get into a – uhhh – a scheming bag, y'know? Haa – HAAAA! We've got our own record company, which means that we can make any kind of crazy plans we want to.

"We can spend time... plotting, y'know. It gives us something to play with. And it also means that we can make records 'n stuff without feeling, 'We're gonna turn out another record for The Man'."

The Dead not only tape every single show that they perform, but they even tape their soundchecks as well, even if the soundcheck is just Garcia doodling for three hours. It all goes down on tape. Why d'ya tape everything, Jerry?

"We-e-e-e-lll... you can't always trust your memory... can you?"

But what do you do with all these miles of tape?

"We take 'em all back to California and burn 'em. Hey – take a look at this." He ambles over to

a corner of the room and pulls this huge mound of celluloid tagliatelle out from behind a chair. "This here is last night's show." He lets it cascade back on to the floor, wipes his boot on it and drifts back out on to the stage to play a little more.

WHEN you glance over the sleeve credits on West Coast albums of the last few years, you get a distinct "old pals act" vibe off the whole schmear. Maybe these guys are getting a little insular in their old age. Hey, Jerry, have you ever been to see Alice Cooper?

"I never have; never seen him perform. Never been curious enough. It's not my trip. I'm not that much of an entertainment freak. If I go out, I go out to hear some music, and I usually know what I'm going to hear.

"If I'm goin' out, I'm goin' out because I know that so-and-so is playing bass. I hardly ever go to see rock'n'roll bands, because I'm not into the space of being able to get off on a rock'n'roll band. Whatever I would be digging would be whatever the band's limitations were, and I'm less interested in my own music than in the music I'm going out to see.

"So if I'm gonna go out, it automatically has to be better than me, which means that it has to be better than anything I'm better than. And I'm better than a lot of rock'n'roll bands.

"I have a small percentage of get-off space. There's not many things that get me off. It has to be pretty deep."

Hmmmmmm... it does seem as if Jerry Garcia is getting a trifle hidebound these days. I mean, it's one thing to rap about striving for new forms 'n all that garf, but if you don't bother to check out where other people are at then there's a very real danger of getting a trifle out of touch.

JERRY Garcia is a genuinely charming old hippie. If he wasn't in the Dead and wasn't a star and lived down the street from me, I'd probably try and hang out with him a lot and maybe cop the odd guitar lesson from him. But listening to the Dead these days is like visiting your relatives.

It's pleasant and relaxing and really quite enjoyable, but it's also more than a little soporific. They've lost most of their punch and power, and their music now is rich and full, but sluggish and old and fat and slow.

They open up their set with Chuck Berry's "Around And Around" played about as inappropriately as is possible. It would be foolish to sing: *"Well, the joint was flowin', flowin' round and round/Just ebbin' and a-flowin', what a laid-back sound,"* but that's really the way it is.

Even when the Dead play Berry, it just doesn't rock.

Not that I'd want them to come on with strobe lights, power chords and green eye makeup, but... hey, wake up in there, you guys! It is only on "Peggy-O" and "I Know You Rider" that their laid-backery coalesces with their material and produces music of genuine, tranquil beauty.

The blue lights highlight the grey in Garcia's hair and beard, turning it almost silvery. He looks very old against the clean-cut All-American Boy collegiate look currently spotted by Bob Weir. Even that phoenix-like guitar sparkle seems a trifle dimmed, and the same licks just seem to be coming around again.

And – horror of horrors – at one point he even leaves the stage between numbers to take a leak.

Another illusion shattered.

Hair guitar: Garcia

JOESTEVENS

Cheery Garcia: "I have a small percentage of get-off space..."

GRATEFUL DEAD

BLUES FOR ALLAH

RELEASED SEPTEMBER 1, 1975

From a garage studio, the GD aspire to peace in the Middle East, classical lyricism and a whole new stylistic lexicon. A wider, "weirder" eighth, long on ambition. BY LOUIS PATTISON

CROWNED King of Saudi Arabia in 1964, Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud was scion to one of the country's most respected dynasties, his bloodline having run through many of the country's most eminent religious leaders. But in a climate of political corruption and religious zealotry, Faisal was a moderniser and a reformer, aiming to minimise the influence of the radical clerics and introduce a new plurality of thought to the desert kingdom. Despite the boldness of his reforms, King Faisal was a popular ruler. But his reign was curtailed when, in March 1975, he was assassinated – shot dead at point-blank range by his half-brother's son during Majlis, a ceremonial council at the royal palace.

It is a mark of Faisal's surprisingly groovy credentials that the king was reputed to have been a fan of the Grateful Dead. As news broke worldwide about his death, the Dead were holed up at Ace's, a tiny home studio above Bob Weir's garage in Mill Valley, California, where they had just begun the recording of what would become their eighth album. Rather than the usual Dead trick of extensively road-testing songs before committing them to tape, for the record that would become known as *Blues For Allah*, the plan was to cook up some brand-new material in the confines of the studio, and thereby slip out of old habits. The news of Faisal's death had a profound effect on this emerging material – and nowhere more than the title track.

An extended 12-minute suite titled "Blues For Allah: Sand Castles And Glass Camels/Unusual Occurrences In The Desert", it moves through sacred chants, meditational lulls, the chirruping of crickets and incursions of instrumental turbulence. It strikes an unusual tone for the Dead – improvisational and free-flowing as per the standard, but presented with a sombreness and discipline that is rare in their catalogue. It boasts a typically erudite Robert Hunter lyric, drawing influence from scripture and literature from the Bible to the *Arabian Nights*. "*What good is spilling blood?*" asks Garcia. But this is more than a requiem for one man. Some 18 months before the album's recording, the Yom Kippur war had reshaped the Middle East in just three weeks of vicious, attritional combat. It is not in the nature of the Grateful Dead to wander into a warzone. But in such context, *Blues For Allah* sounds like a plea for peace: "*Let's meet as friends/The flower of Islam/The fruit of Abraham*," goes one pivotal line. As a symbol of their intent, the band printed Hunter's lyrics in both Hebrew and Arabic on the album's inner sleeve.

The sound that the Dead explored on "Blues For Allah..." does stand out as something of an anomaly on the album as a whole, however. By convening the group with no particular outcome in mind, Garcia hoped to get them to gel in a new way. "It's musically the most adventurous album we've done in a pretty long time," he told an interviewer, mid-way through the album's recording. "Our development has been to synthesise various forms, like playing jazz, playing country & western, playing rhythm & blues and forming combinations of those genres and styles within what we're doing... Now we're working on creating styles." With guests like Mickey Hart, David Crosby and John Cipollina swinging by to join sessions, Weir's tiny studio

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The Dead have regained in the studio a little of what they've always had on stage – the spirit of adventure. Much of this latest release is, of course, what we have come to expect from the Grateful Dead in the '70s – homogenous ensemble playing, intricate harmonies and a lazy rhythm that tastes just as sickly, or just as smooth as Southern Comfort, according to taste. *Blues For Allah* isn't their best... But it's the closest they've come in recent years to what they were trying to achieve with *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*."

CHAS DE WHALLEY, NME, SEPT 27, 1975

TRACKMARKS

1. Help On The Way/ Slipknot! ★★★★
2. Franklin's Tower ★★★★★
3. King Solomon's Marbles/Stronger Than Dirt/Milkin' The Turkey ★★★★
4. The Music Never Stopped ★★★★
5. Crazy Fingers ★★★★
6. Sage & Spirit ★★★★
7. Blues for Allah/Sand Castles & Glass Camels/Unusual Occurrences In The Desert ★★★★

Produced by: The Grateful Dead
Recorded at: Ace's Studio, Mill Valley, California
Personnel includes: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Donna Jean Godchaux (vocals), Keith Godchaux (keyboards), Mickey Hart (percussion), Bill Kreutzmann (drums, percussion), Phil Lesh (bass guitar), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Steven Schuster (flute, reeds)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 12

was frequently packed to the rafters. And with no engineer watching the clock and enough chemical sustenance to keep the music flowing, sessions blossomed indefinitely. One recording stint, Garcia estimated, went on for an unbroken 50-hour stretch.

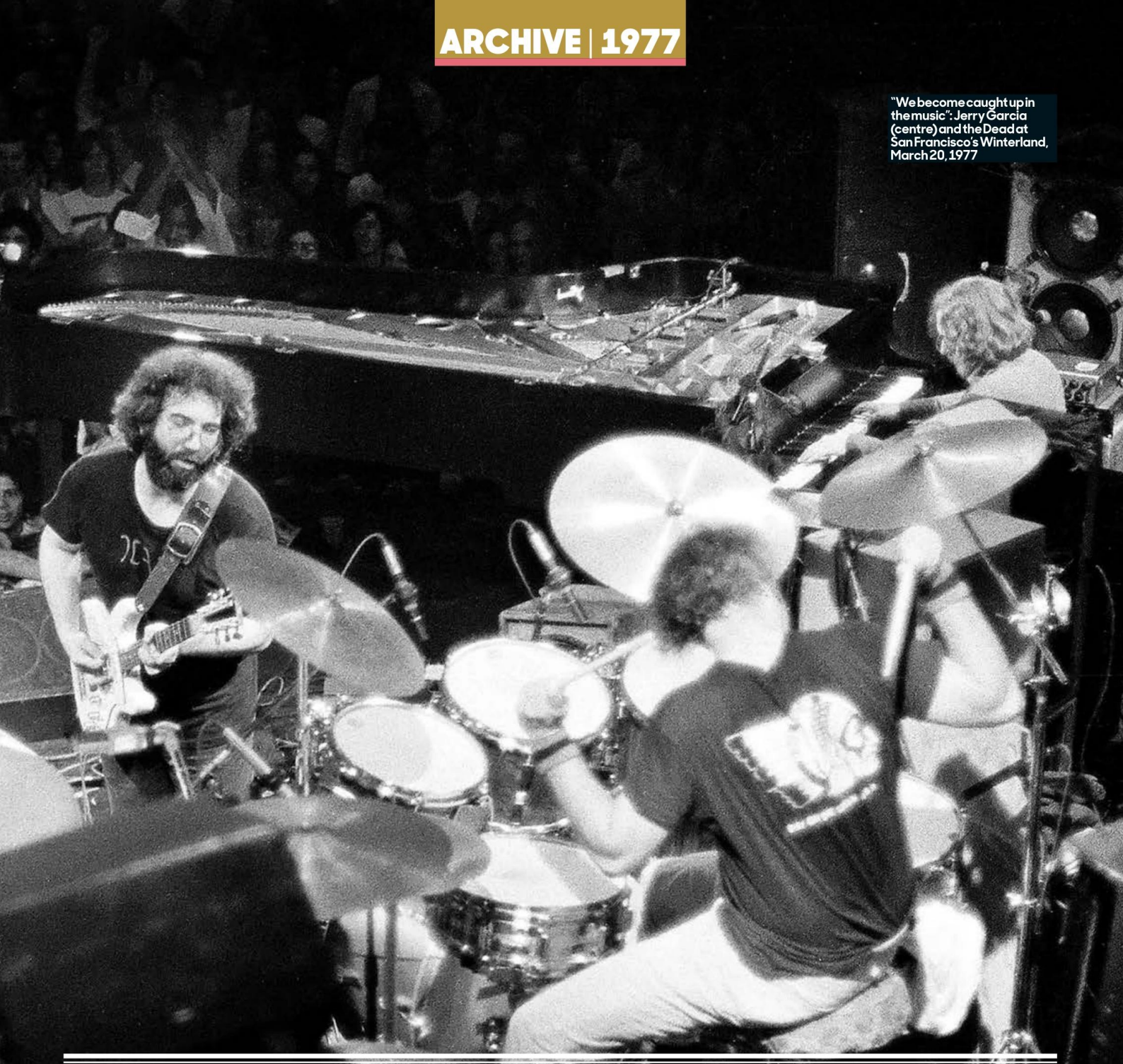
Happily, this new approach would bear fruit. *Blues For Allah* is both recognisably the Grateful Dead, but a little time and space away from the road had offered an opportunity to expand into new vistas. An incipient grooviness runs throughout, although a reliance on knotty time signatures and exotic melodic progressions – not to mention Keith Godchaux's twinkling Rhodes – would seem to align the album with the jazz fusion of the era, the music of Miles Davis or Herbie Hancock. In moments, as on the dense and tumbling "King Solomon's Marbles" or "Sage & Spirit" – a gorgeous, Bob Weir-penned embarkation into flute-powered acid-folk – the group dispense with vocals altogether, as if eager to let the music breath as cleanly as possible.

But the songs here undoubtedly deliver, too. "Crazy Fingers" is a gentle reggae skank decorated with watery keyboards and ringing chimes. Its lyrics are comprised of a number of haiku-like verses that toy with the imagery of the elements and the natural world, and the result is both tranquil and spiritually rejuvenating. "The Music Never Stopped", meanwhile, is *Blues For Allah*'s most upfront anthem. Written over the phone by Bob Weir with his friend John Perry Barlow, the recording – complete with roaring sax and bravura backing vocals from Donna Jean Godchaux – feels like a celebration of the rock'n'roll experience, a band playing tribute to the relationship between themselves and their fans. "*There's a band out on the highway/ They're high-steppin' into town/They're a rainbow full of sound/It's fireworks, calliopes and clowns...*"

ONE STINT, GARCIA ESTIMATED, WENT ON FOR A 50-HOUR STRETCH

But *Blues For Allah*'s stand-out track is "Franklin's Tower". Soon to become a Dead live staple, it takes up a riff inspired by Lou Reed's "Walk On The Wild Side" and laces it through a playful funk bounce, with Garcia delivering a Hunter lyric that deserves unpicking. It's littered with clues – Franklin's Tower itself would appear to be a reference to the Liberty Bell, which rang out in 1776 to summon the people of Ben Franklin's hometown, Philadelphia, to hear the first public reading of the Declaration Of Independence. It's not just a history lesson, though, Hunter has explained it as a something more personal – "a birthday wish both for my son and for my country, each young and subject to the winds of vicissitude". Freedom and fortune, liberty and conscience intertwine in a lyric layered with meaning. But there's no need to get too forensic about it. As the song has it: "*If you get confused, just listen to the music play*".

"I think that's the first record we've made in years where we really had fun," said Garcia of *Blues For Allah*. "We laughed a lot and got good and crazy. We had an opportunity to get weirder than we normally get to getting." A little time off tour had been good for the Dead. But with a new suite of material firing, the road was beckoning once more. ●



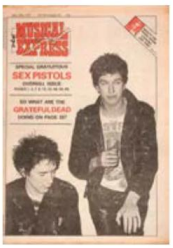
"We become caught up in the music": Jerry Garcia (centre) and the Dead at San Francisco's Winterland, March 20, 1977

"We avoid extremes of wretched excess..."

Fads come and go; the Dead go on forever. *NME* catches them in New York – mind-expanding in performance but streamlined and focused in person. "We're much better now at keeping our heads and bodies in shape," BOB WEIR declares of the reconstructed Grateful Dead, and shrugs off the challenge of punk. "We could play hard, fast and loud all the time," he tells Mick Farren, "but that could get pretty weird."

ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

NME MAY 28, 1977



IT'S LIKE GOING back home. "Acid!" "Acid, black beauties!" "Acid!" "You got any pot to sell?" "No, man, all I got is acid and black beauties." What else could it be but a Grateful Dead concert?

The Grateful Dead must be at an all-time low in terms of fashionability. Nobody seems to have told this to the sea of lank hair and faded denim milling and jostling on the sidewalk outside New York's Palladium theatre. Fads may come and fads may go, but the fact has to be faced that the Dead go on forever. On this particular night they go on for just short of five-and-a-half hours.

It's starting to look as though hard-core hippies are turning into another time-warp subgroup, rather like the old rockers. It may be 10 years since 1967, but looking at this mob in the foyer you wouldn't know it. There's denim and floral prints, earthshoes, acne and old cowboy boots. Some of the throng aimlessly making their way into the auditorium could easily have just folded their tents and hitchhiked down from Woodstock. I begin to get the feeling that these freaks, in between concerts, must go back to a timeless limbo, similar to the one the teds inhabit when they're not parading in their drapes for Jerry Lee Lewis or Chuck Berry.

The Dead also seem to have a slightly unconventional relationship to time. When you've been overdosing on the kind of band who think that three minutes, 20 seconds adds up to a really long song, it's hard immediately to adjust to the Dead's pacing. And oh boy, do they pace.

A five-minute tune-up break between songs is nothing to the Grateful Dead. It's kind of irksome at first, but I suppose it's understandable when you're settling in for a five-hour show. They're on stage amazingly promptly, just 15 minutes after the eight o'clock stated on the tickets. It hardly gives us time to queue up for a beer and find our seats in the decaying 3,000-seat auditorium, before the band are out on stage and rocking.

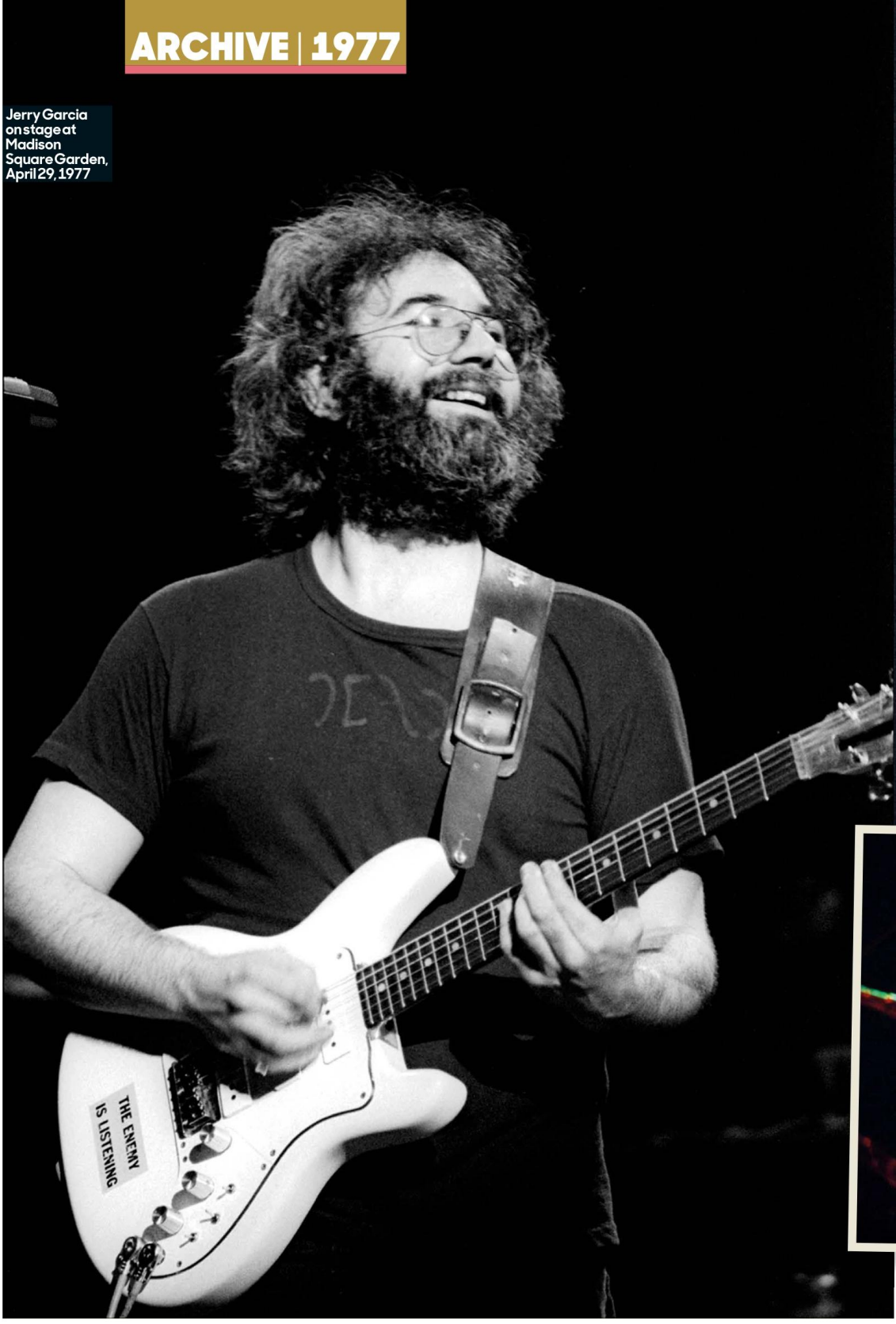
The rocking is fairly relaxed. The Dead have never been a combo that sweated gallons and popped blood vessels, but even by their own standards they're easing their way into the set. It also appears that they haven't played together for a while. There are too many nudges, winks and secret hand-signals for a band who are super-rehearsed and right into their mid-tour stride.

There have also been some changes since I last saw them. Mickey Hart has returned and they're back with the old double-drum lineup. Also Donna Godchaux has now been properly integrated into the band. When they played at Wembley her vocals were, to say the least, abrasive. Now she seems to have totally synched in, and her voice has mellowed down to blend perfectly with those of Weir and Garcia. About the only really unhappy note is the sad absence of Pigpen.

As far as the audience is concerned the Dead can do no wrong. They're loudly and continuously vocal in their stoned appreciation. In that respect the guy sitting next to us is typical. Every time he feels the band have produced some particularly fine musical segment, he emits a loud, woo-woo kind of animal wailing. The strength and duration seems to depend on how pleased he is with the show. Beyond that, we don't hear him give out with another sound.

The guy next to us may be typical in his capacity for noisy response, but apart from that he has to be one of the strangest Grateful Dead fans I've ever come across. He's black, kind of frayed around the edges, and really looks like he ought to be howling at Toots or Bob Marley instead of Garcia and Weir. He does, however, have a pipe that he keeps topped up with black hash.

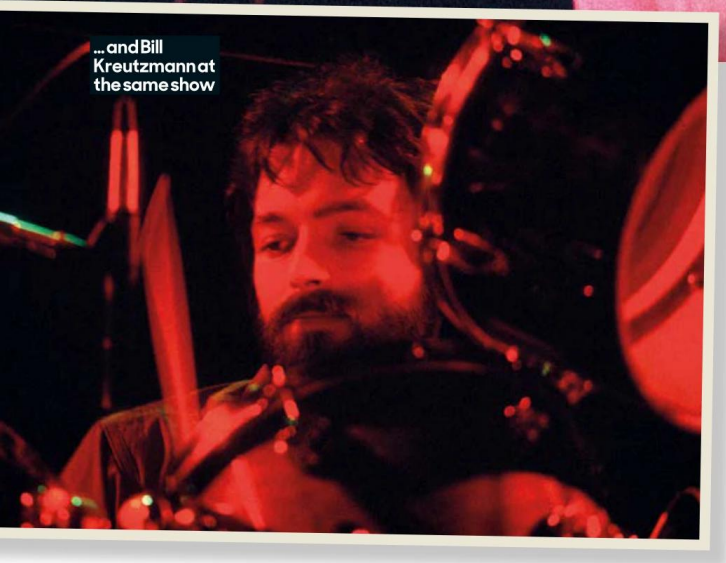
However, I have a problem that's been troubling me since the show started. Do I really love the Grateful Dead, or is it just nostalgia for a lot of warm stoned afternoons that the ill winds of the '70s have blown away for ever? As I sink back into my seat, with a pleasant mellow buzz washing



Jerry Garcia on stage at Madison Square Garden, April 29, 1977

ALLAN TANNENBAUM/GETTY IMAGES

Red or Dead: Bob Weir at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago, May 12, 1977...



...and Bill Kreutzmann at the same show

over me, I begin to see it all a lot more clearly (you remember what Bob Marley said). There really is something timeless and very fine about the Dead, something that has to be divorced from the often brain-damaged antics of audiences who use the band and their music to cling to a now-lost lifestyle.

Garcia's guitar was created in heaven. As it weaves in and out of the lax but always-present rhythm section, it really does create patterns that are far beyond the capabilities of most pickers. It also cuts through the hair and redundant hippie posturing to a very essential, if laid-back, truth.

The selection of songs span almost the entire course of the Dead's career, including the various solo spinoffs. There's "New, New Minglewood Blues" off the very first album, there's a track from *Blues For Allah*, "Sugar Magnolia", "Deal" from one of Garcia's solo albums, "Cassidy" from one of Bob Weir's.

When the audience get altogether too rowdy they turn the hand-clapping round until the crowd are assisting in the introduction to the Dead version of "Not Fade Away". Before the song can get under way, however, it mutates into an elongated drum solo (in which, incidentally, Bill Kreutzmann, in the nicest possible way, dumps all over Mickey Hart).

It's quite a poignant Grateful Dead for the first half of the show. Garcia sticks close to his amps, Phil Lesh is positioned right by the drum risers, Keith Godchaux is almost invisible, while Donna Godchaux comes demurely on when her vocal assistance is needed, occasionally shakes her amazing, waist-length hair, and splits back to the wings when she's no longer required. About the only focus of visual attention is Bob Weir and the two drummers.

THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING TIMELESS AND VERY FINE ABOUT THE DEAD

After the interval, the mournful songs like "Brown-Eyed Women" and "Cumberland Blues" start to get punctuated by Bob Weir cowboy inserts like "El Paso" and Johnny Cash's "Big River". The atmosphere becomes increasingly more lively. Garcia executes little stomping dances as he pours out cascades of silver notes. The whole second half leads up to the final rocking set-piece.

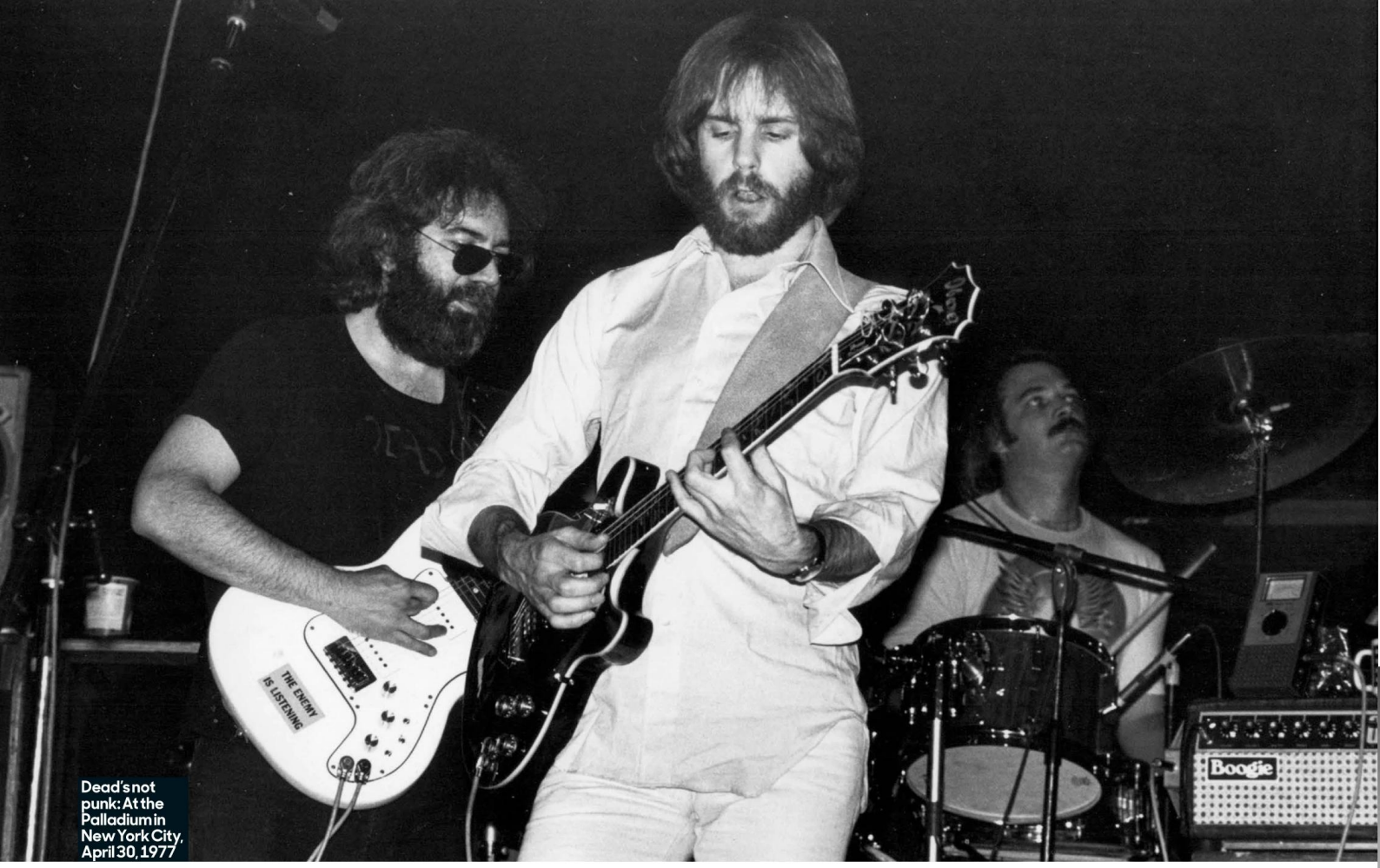
The introduction is so tentative that it takes a couple of verses to recognise it. Suddenly realisation dawns. It's Chuck Berry's "Around And Around". For the next 25 minutes it builds relentlessly with everyone in the band, particularly Bob Weir, who handles the brunt of the vocals, running at full stretch.

There's a long wait for the encore, but it's worth it. The Dead return with an immaculate version of "Uncle John's Band". The audience leaves with the Dead's own wistful anthem ringing in their ears. I, for one, feel more emotionally fulfilled than I have done after a rock'n'roll show for a very long time.

I can't even be brought down by the way the cabs on Union Square have reverted to the old 1967 policy of not picking up hippies.

Some hours later in another part of town (the elegant, art nouveau St Regis hotel, to be precise) they are a mite more tolerant of hippies – hippies with money, that is. Indeed, affluent hippies are now very well looked upon, 10 years after the ➤

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES



Dead's not punk: At the Palladium in New York City, April 30, 1977

JOESTEVENS

fact. Jimmy Carter courts their company, and there are even TV ads aimed at them. There are limits, though.

When the photographer attempts to remove his garish, metallic, Ferrari pit-crew jacket, the maître d' sternly requests he should put it back on. You don't sit in the St Regis cocktail lounge in your shirt sleeves. My god, what next?

As you probably guessed, we are sitting in the St Regis cocktail lounge. The photographer, myself and Betsy the redoubtable press officer are all waiting for Bob Weir. We are drinking gin to pass the time. After some minutes and a couple more gins, Betsy goes to make a phone call. Bob Weir is up in Jerry Garcia's room. We head for the lift.

Garcia's room could easily be a college common room. The conversation is low-key and informed. It is very un-rock'n'roll. The subject is how independent television is rapidly eroding the power of the networks. This is really fascinating, but the presence of Betsy reminds me I am not here to be entertained. I'm here to do an interview. It's suggested that Bob and I go down the hall to his room and get the thing together.

There was a time when Bob Weir was the teen appeal of the Dead. This has faded a little as the years have slipped by. He's recently grown a beard, and his eyes seem to have what I can only describe as a fixed dare-I-say Valium glaze. There's nothing Valiumed, however, about his mind. It's sharp and perceptive. The polite preliminaries are kept to a minimum. I turn on the tape recorder and get down to business.

Was it, as it looked, that the Dead were a little under-rehearsed?

"It looked that way?"

There seemed to be a lot of nods and winks going down. Weir smiles.

"That's pretty much the nature of our music. We have an enormous repertoire of material that's kind of sketchily rehearsed. We'll pull out a song that we haven't done in a long time. When you're doing something like that, then visual cues are very necessary."

You'll pick a song right in the heat of the moment, in the middle of the set?

"Oh yes. If it's appropriate. Maybe we are a little under-rehearsed. We could do with more time, but I can't say we're doing badly. There's always a lot more you can do."

> **"IT'S FUN AGAIN. IT'S BECOME MORE ALIVE. IT'S HAPPENING"**
> BOB WEIR

Bob Weir is pleasantly serene. Everything will be taken care of in the fullness of time, seems to sum up his attitude. The conversation still concentrates on time, but slightly changes perspective. The Dead have been on the road for 10 years now...

"Twelve."

The Dead have been on the road for 12 years now. How have attitudes changed?

"I think things have streamlined over the years. We know much better what to expect of the road and what to expect of ourselves. We're much better now at keeping our heads and bodies in shape. You have to remember that we play a very long show, and it takes a lot of energy. We eat well on the road..." he grins "... and avoid extremes of wretched excess. I've always maintained the notion that the music is what it's all about."

I guess pacing is very important?

"Oh yes. We try and arrange tours so there's enough time to get proper rest and..."

No, no, I meant the actual pacing throughout a show.

"Oh, really. I think if we tried we could work ourselves up to the point where we could play hard, fast and loud all the time, but that could get pretty weird."

The subject of being on the road for 12 years leads very naturally to the question of bands evolving away from their audiences. Does Weir feel that the Dead have drifted away from their roots?

"I don't think so."

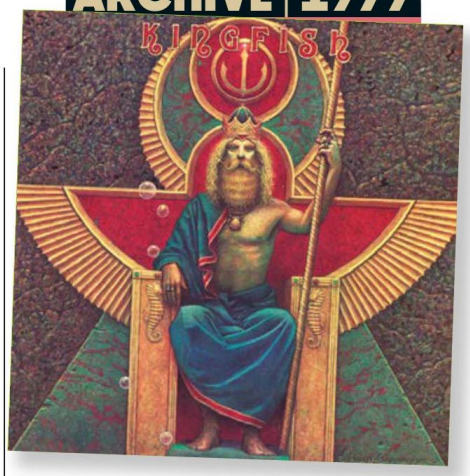
Damn few of last night's concert audience went home to a luxury hotel the way the band did.

"Damn few of the audience try to keep the pace we do. Like I said, our major focus is on the music. That's the way we can keep in touch with and cater to the fans, by keeping the music alive and vital."

There's something a little incongruous about hearing one of the Dead talking about "the fans", but I let it go. Weir is warming to the subject of the artist getting divorced from the street.

"At home I really don't have much of a problem about being on the streets, although the pace that I work at pretty much keeps me isolated once again. If that doesn't work I'll have to reassess the situation. As it is now, I'm so immersed in work, I don't really have much of a social life."

This picture that Weir paints of his secluded, almost spartan dedication fits with the unnaturally neat, very un-rock'n'roll hotel suite.



I ask what he's working on.

"I write, I record, I perform. I may do a film score if I have the time."

Do you want to talk about the film score?

"Not really. It's pretty much under wraps for the moment."

What happened to [*Weir-fronted band*] Kingfish?

"Kingfish fell by the wayside for me. I simply didn't have enough time to make it worthwhile for the other people in the band. It's possible it could happen again, but it's not happening at the moment. Not many side projects can spin out from this new streamlined model of the Grateful Dead."

Weir permits himself a smile at the idea of the Grateful Dead considered as this year's new gas-guzzler from Detroit. I enquire as to what has changed.

"It's fun again. It's become more alive." He spreads his hands, temporarily at a loss for words. "It's happening."

There was a point when it stopped being fun?

"Yeah. Really. That was when we knocked off in 1974. It'd become too cumbersome and it was time to relax, reassess and maybe reconstruct – or not. Eventually we sat down and had a meeting and decided to reconstruct it in a more organic pattern, and it worked. I guess it's worked so far. I suppose we might reach the same kind of plateau again, and the Grateful Dead will stop being fun. When that time comes we'll have to look at the situation all over again. We've got quite a way to run yet, though."

There's no temptation to live on a legend and just coast? Weir looks horrified.

"Oh no, that would become boring after one night. It couldn't be satisfying."

I suppose it's the idea of artistic satisfaction that leads us back to the subject of relationship with the audience. I wonder how much the Dead feed off the response of the audience.

"I think it's hard to differentiate between the way we're interacting among ourselves and the way we're interacting with the audience. I think, to be truthful, we just become caught up in the music and work off that."

So why are you working comparatively small theatres on this tour?

"It's mainly because of the sound. The sound is always better in a smaller place."

So it's not to get a better atmosphere going?

"I can't actually see anything past the first few rows. I think it's a safe rule that it gets logarithmically less intimate outside of the first 20 rows."

The phone rings. Weir patiently explains to the person on the other end that his guest list is full and that he doesn't have any tickets. Everyone wants to see the show?

"I didn't even know them."

Bob Weir enquires if there were any scalpers outside the theatre. I tell him I didn't see any, but there were people yelling that they'd give 50 bucks for a ticket. He sighs his distaste. What else, I wonder, bugs him these days?

"I guess that's my only soapbox at the moment. Like I said, our main thrust has always been the music."

The music's everything?

"Yeah."

This is beginning to sound a bit on the bland side. I really don't feel I can totally stand still for it. Surely music isn't always just an end in itself?

"I'm sorry?"

Surely music is a motivating force? At a very minimum it shapes the audience's state of mind when they come out of the concert.

"Yeah. I suppose that is true. I think all we can do is to give them the kind of music that makes them feel good."

Can't music all too often can be picked up and used as a battle flag? We talk a bit about the punk/hippie hostilities back in the UK. Weir shakes his head slowly. "I don't understand that kind of thing at all. It's twisted."

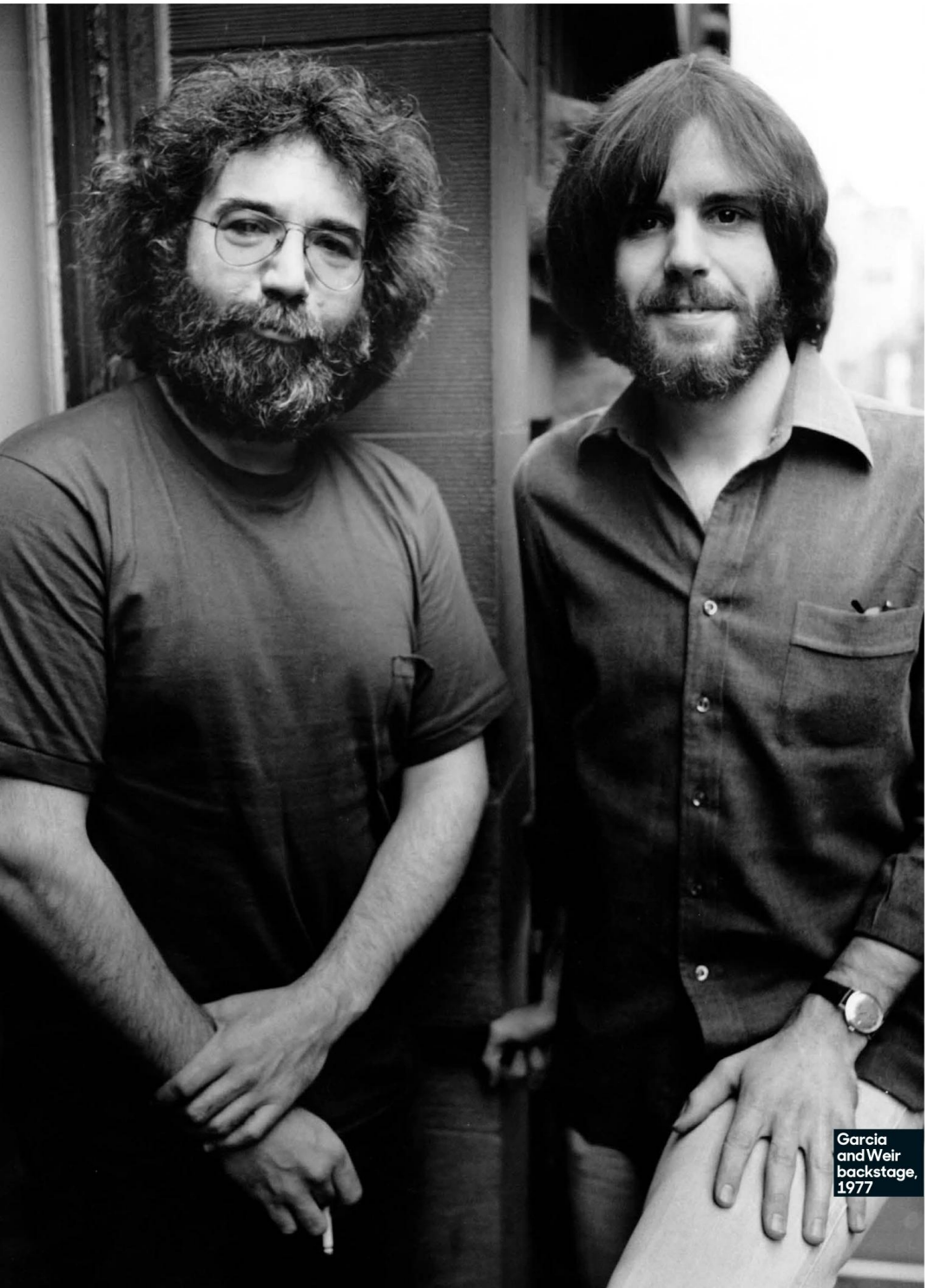
For closers, we switch to a less complicated vein. I ask Weir about his apparent love for trashy cowboy songs like "Big Iron", "El Paso" and "Big River". Weir grins.

"I have a number of them I can pull out when they're needed. They're fun to deliver."

You don't have a secret desire to be Johnny Cash or Jim Reeves?

Weir cracks up at the prospect.

"Oh no. No way. It's just that those songs give a kind of variety. Without variety you can't have no horse race."



Garcia and Weir backstage, 1977

©RTSIMON/MEDIAPUNCH/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

GRATEFUL DEAD

TERRAPIN STATION

RELEASED JULY 27, 1977

You can hire them Fleetwood Mac's producer. You can dress them up for radio. But you can't tether the Grateful Dead's free spirit. *BY* TERRY STAUNTON

LONG regarded a self-sufficient unit charting their own, idiosyncratic path in the music biz, the Grateful Dead threw their fans a curveball on *Terrapin Station* with the introduction of an "outsider". However, the enlisting of a producer with no previous ties to them wasn't entirely at the band's behest, but rather a condition imposed by the head of their new label, Clive Davis of Arista – and it took extreme measures to get them to knuckle down to the changes.

"During the cutting of the basic tracks it was pretty hard to get every member of the band in the studio at the same time," producer Keith Olsen revealed in the 1999 biography *Garcia: An American Life*. "So [*Grateful Dead roadie Steve*] Parish went out to the hardware store and got these giant nails and a great big hammer, and as soon as everybody was in he hammered the door shut from the inside."

Theories abound as to the thinking behind hiring Olsen, who would go on to help Foreigner sell seven million copies of *Double Vision*, but at the time of his work with the Dead he was best known for producing Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* predecessor, the eponymous 1975 set that introduced Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks to the lineup.

The phenomenal success of *Rumours* and the Eagles' *Hotel California* in the six months prior to the release of *Terrapin Station* had convinced Davis the Dead were due their own elevation to multi-platinum status. The band already had an enormous fanbase. Perhaps they could now break through to a new audience with a mellower and sophisticated soft-rock version of their proposition.

Enter Olsen and a somewhat reluctant makeover Dead, with flourishes of jazz, folk, prog... and reggae. Yet, sonic concessions to the aural flavours du jour aside, and a noticeable departure from what went before, the album still remains stubbornly detached from the mainstream Davis was so keen the band embrace.

The producer's overtures to modernity, to make the album supposedly more palatable to FM programmers, are evident from the first track. Session man extraordinaire Tom Scott was called upon to play saxophone on Bob Weir's "Estimated Prophet", the crisp horns punctuating a slick groove with more than a few echoes of Steely Dan. There's a similar striving for contemporary radio-friendliness in the clinical funk motifs of the long-standing live favourite Motown cover "Dancin' In The Street", although many reviewers felt Olsen veered too far in the direction of generic disco.

Dead signatures of yore survive on the Phil Lesh and Peter Monk co-write "Passenger", a rocking West Coast number distinguished by some exemplary Jerry Garcia slide guitar, and Donna Jean Godchaux's vocal counterpoint to Weir's recollections of the heady days of Grace Slick at her most regal Jefferson Airplane pomp. Godchaux is to the fore again on "Sunrise", which while perhaps overburdened by intrusive strings is nonetheless a powerful ballad written as a tribute to

CRITICS' VERDICT

"'Terrapin Station' stands or falls on the success of Robert Hunter's primary metaphor; at the moment I'm taking 'terrapin' to be a synonym for a fictional otherworld, not necessarily heaven. The Dead have chosen to embellish this piece using full orchestration, arranged by Paul Buckmaster and played by the Martyn Ford crew (!) with a refrain that features The English Chorale... Only time will tell whether Garcia has surpassed the pitfalls of rock playing with classical fire. My own feelings after the first hearing were of profound peace..."
MAX BELL, NME, JULY 30, 1977

TRACKMARKS

1. Estimated Prophet ★★★★
2. Dancin' In The Street ★★
3. Passenger ★★★★
4. Samson & Delilah ★★★
5. Sunrise ★★★
6. Terrapin Pt 1 (Lady With A Fan, Terrapin Station, Terrapin, Terrapin Transit, At A Siding, Terrapin Flyer, Refrain) ★★★

Label: Arista
Producer: Keith Olsen
Recorded at: Sound City, Los Angeles; Automated Sound, New York; Air, Trident, Abbey Road, London
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Donna Jean Godchaux (vocals), Keith Godchaux (keyboards, vocals), Mickey Hart (drums), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Phil Lesh (bass), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Tom Scott (saxophone), Paul Buckmaster (orchestral arrangements), The English Chorale (backing vocals)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 28

the band's recently deceased tour manager, Rex Jackson.

The track that most rigorously harks back to at least the improvisational spirit of the Dead is "Samson And Delilah", a loose shuffle reading of the Reverend Gary Davis gospel-blues standard, with frenetic guitar-picking and swirls of Hammond organ jousting behind a pulpit-pounding vocal.

Garcia is largely a bit player across most of side one, as if saving himself for the demands of the flip side's gargantuan "Terrapin" suite. The shifting musical passages are intriguing and baffling in equal measure, flitting between the prog territory of, say, King Crimson, the jazz whims of a Gil Evans or Miles Davis, excursions into Elizabethan court music, and elements best described as "spy-movie soundtrack".

Robert Hunter's lyrics continue to be pored over for meaning and/or significance. Are they a reworking of the journey of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ancient mariner? Is the terrapin a metaphor for an unknown, otherworldly afterlife?

The 16-minute suite had already been played at live shows, but its creator's nose was put out of joint when it came to committing the opus to tape. Initial sessions in Los Angeles had gone well, the band especially pleased with Olsen's microphone placements to closer replicate the Dead's live sound and dual drum-kit setup (Mickey Hart had recently rejoined the lineup).

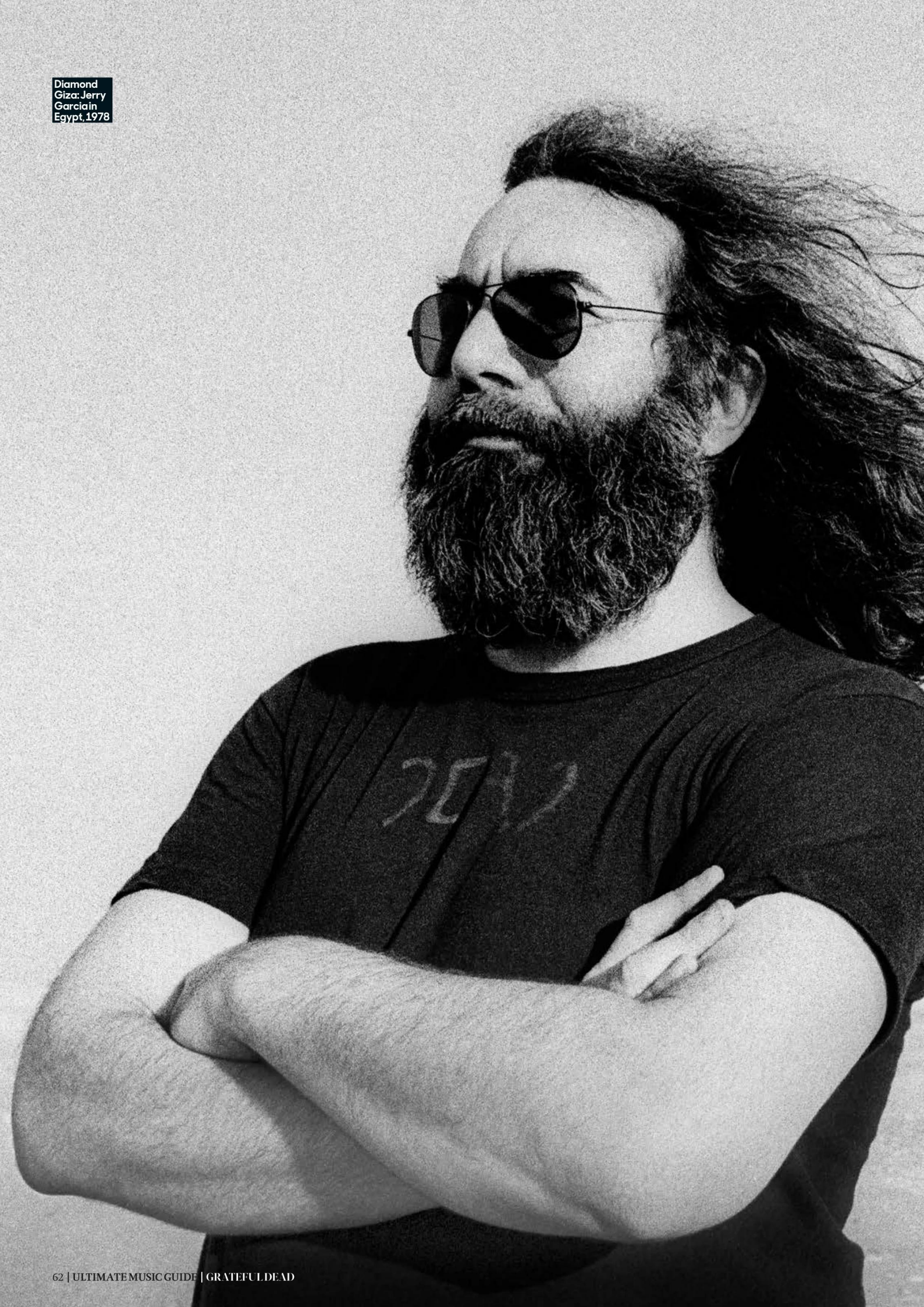
IT ATTAINED GOLD-DISC STATUS A DECADE AFTER ITS RELEASE

However, Olsen opted to overdub the strings and choral vocals in London, scored by the in-demand Paul Buckmaster, but Garcia was unable to attend the sessions himself and was surprised when the producer unilaterally chose to erase some of the band's playing to more easily accommodate orchestral passages.

Consequently, the Dead's high-profile studio return after a two-year hiatus was an album with which their leader was not entirely happy, and which despite a slew of positive reviews only reached No 28 on the *Billboard* charts – lower than the likes of *From The Mars Hotel* or *Blues For Allah*, and far short of the commercial game-changer Arista was hoping for. It nonetheless continued to sell steadily, finally attaining gold-disc status a decade after its release.

Mickey Hart told more than one interviewer the problem was that Olsen "didn't know the Grateful Dead and tried to mould them in his own image". Jerry Garcia was just as forthright; quoted in *A Long Strange Trip*, the 2001 biography by the band's long-serving press agent Dennis McNally, he joked that the producer "tried to put us in a dress".

It was, at its core, not the way of the Dead, and part of the reason why drummer Bill Kreutzmann believes the album is not representative of the group. "Keith had us play the same thing over and over again, and we're not really the type of band that can put up with that," he writes in his 2015 autobiography, *Deal*. "Our very identity is based on the opposite principle." ●



Diamond Giza: Jerry Garcia in Egypt, 1978

"We would've played here whether there was an audience or not"

In the shadow of the Pyramids and the eye of an eclipse, the Dead rock the cradle of civilisation. The Captain and crew take their ultimate trip – to Egypt to race camels, explode the curse of Tutankhamun and provide mystical music for the ancients. "It doesn't matter if we play horrible," JERRY GARCIA tells Michael Watts. "This experience is greater than the elements of performance."

ADRIAN BOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

Bob Weir ponders the pyramids

ADRIAN BOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 23, 1978

IN HIS TRAVEL article, "A Pleasure Cruise In 1929", Evelyn Waugh wrote about the Mena House hotel in Giza:

"This is a large building in pseudo-Oriental style, standing in a vast and lovely garden. The pyramids were a quarter of a mile away, impressive by sheer bulk and reputation; it felt odd to be living at such close quarters with anything quite so famous – it was like having the Prince of Wales at the next table in a restaurant; one kept pretending not to notice, while all the time glancing furtively to see if they were still there...

"There was plenty of life at Mena, particularly at the weekends. The residents were mostly elderly and tranquil, but for luncheon and tea all kinds of people appeared. Huge, personally conducted luxury tours of Americans and northern Englishmen, Australians in jodhpurs with toupees and fly-whisks, very smart Egyptian officers with vividly painted motor cars and astonishing courtesans – one in a bright green picture frock led a pet monkey on a gold chain; it wore a jewelled bracelet round its neck and fleaed its rump on the terrace while she had her tea...

"We used to ride most days for two hours, making a wide circle through the Arab village and up the ancient track past the Sphinx and the smaller pyramids. To please their customers, the boys called their beasts by American names – "Yankydoodle", "Hitchycoo", "Redhot Momma". They were most anxious to please in every way, even to seizing our hands and foretelling by the lines in our palms illimitable wealth, longevity, and fecundity..."

Times change, but the Hotel Mena House still twinkles in the garbage dump of Cairo. From the airport one drives to it in a battered black and white cab, right the way through a city that looks equally as though it is being knocked down and rebuilt, the sickly-sweet stench of drains and greasy fried mutton commingling in the hot, dry air.

The Nile Hilton and the Sheraton are more high-powered – the cool temples of businessmen, politicians and correspondents arranging deals in the large foyers. A slightly old-fashioned, even-paced charm clings, though, to the Mena House, even under its new, Indian ownership.

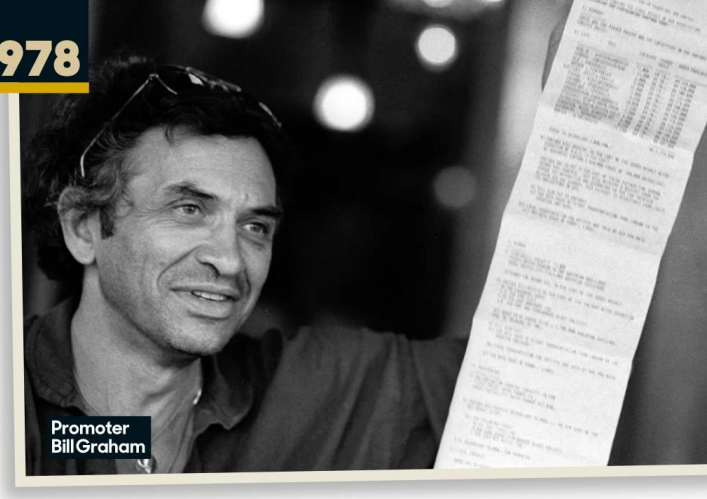
From here in 1943 Churchill, Roosevelt and Chiang-Kai Shek issued the Cairo Declaration, which set forth the conditions for ending the Second World War. Now it's usually populated by elderly German and American tourists, many of them with cameras strapped across their shoulders and sticks to their arms, but there are enough young people to fleshly decorate the grass around the swimming pool out front.

EACH DAY BOB WEIR JOGGED AROUND THE PYRAMIDS, RETURNING TO THE BAR FOR A BEER

In the last two weeks, however, these were not quite your average young couples with the one baby and the excursion airline ticket through Europe. They were getting... odder.

First of all arrived a bunch of long, lank-haired guys who spent their time driving up and down the short route past the Great Pyramid of Cheops and the Sphinx to the son et lumière theatre which occupies the flat ground at the foot of Chephren's Pyramid; there they set up huge banks of amplifiers and rows of lights on a stage erected before the stone backdrop of Chephren's Temple. A transmitter was placed part-way up one face of the Great Pyramid, for communication with Mena House, and a cable was run from the tomb of Cheops to the stage. "It's for the echo," they told bewildered guests at the hotel; the young boys who raced fine Arabian steeds up and down the road to the Sphinx were no less puzzled, but they were also delighted that the new presence seemed to promise extra baksheesh from the tourists.

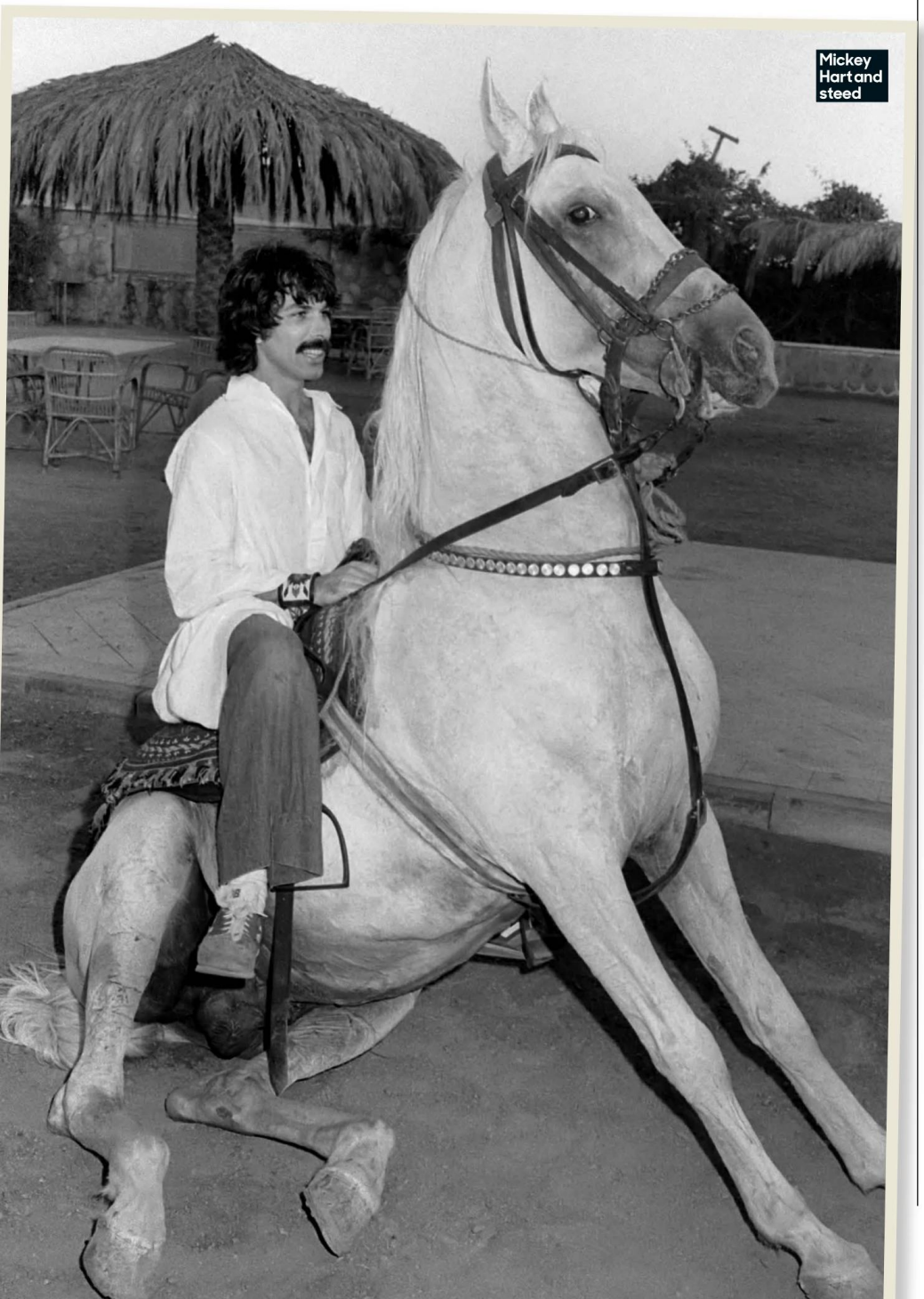
Once established in the hotel, these men, who would have been recognised anywhere else in the western world as a rock'n'roll road crew, were gradually joined, in dribs and drabs, by hippies, both survivors of the '60s and a newer breed.


Promoter Bill Graham

They besieged the hotel manager for beds. He didn't know where to turn; they had been fully booked for some time. Hotel rooms are much in demand in Cairo since the population has quadrupled in five years with the Israeli War. And so camp beds were dusted off, sometimes four to a room.

THE Mena House began to assume an amusing aspect. The lobby seemed always to be full of girls with hair down their backs and dressed in tie-dyed shifts and T-shirts, as though John Sebastian's old wardrobe had been raided; and the guys went completely ethnic once they had climbed up Great Cheops in the company of Green Eyes, the guide, and lain down in the darkness of the tomb. The desert began to have its effect; that, and an imagination about the power of the pyramids, conveyed in the famous story of the blunt razorblade placed within a pyramid-shaped model that always regenerates itself, which was extolled in a dozen books in the hotel's stationery store. And so they began turning up in the coffee shop clothed fully as Bedouins, their heads in burnouses, the rest of them shrouded in the ankle-length galabia. In the beginning it was a laugh; eventually, as each morning you awoke to the sight of the Great Pyramid looking above you, it felt completely natural, quite in keeping with the nature of their pilgrimage.

The talk over the Oriental chicken burgers was of pyramidal meridians and strange resonances in the tombs, of Edgar Cayce's theory that the pyramid at Giza was built more than 10,000 years ago by non-Egyptians as a storage place for the history of mankind, and other morsels of trippy arcana. Above all, they were waiting for something to trigger their excitement, and that something turned out early last week to be somebodies.


Mickey Hart and steed

The Grateful Dead are not unknown in Cairo, even though the city's recent acquaintance with rock music has been limited to a couple of visits by Demis Roussos and a sparsely attended concert last year by Martha and the Vandellas. When it was known that the Dead would be playing in Egypt, DJ Sherif El Attar invited listeners to his show on Radio Cairo to phone in requests for tickets; he considered that a dozen replies in 15 minutes was frankly extraordinary, even discounting the fabled difficulties of the Egyptian telephone system.

Still, there were more people outside than inside Egypt worked up about the Dead's decision to play the pyramids. Deadheads converged on Mena House, where international word-of-mouth said they were staying, from unlikely places like Beirut. A charter flight of 270 came from America. The airport was littered with backpacks as queues formed for visas.

THE Dead not only attracted their long-time fans, they brought with them friends and associates like Ken Kesey, who came amidst an entourage of Merry Pranksters that included his younger brother Chuck, the owner of a dairy in Oregon which produces wholefood candy bars; and Bill Graham, who couldn't believe that he was in Egypt with the Grateful Dead after all these years of talking about it. "A magnificent gesture," he declaimed in his customarily expansive style.

They all settled down, as the concerts were due to begin last Thursday, to a life of nomads temporarily encamped in their well-chosen caravanserai. The Pranksters were on the bus again, and only the scenery was different. George Walker, one of the original day-glo freaks, whom Kesey called Hardly Visible, took to disappearing into the desert in his galabia with a metal detector, looking for coins and ancient shards of pottery, which he arranged in his room. Bill Graham, who was almost inviolable from the telephone and the telex, was seen riding across the dunes like El Cid.

Then there was rhythm guitarist Bob Weir, a different case. Not prepared to allow Egypt to deflect him from normal routine back home, each day he jogged around the pyramids with David Freiberg from the Jefferson Starship, returning to the bar and collapsing clammily before a cold beer; just one.

Old manager Rock Scully was supposed to be there but never quite made it; no-one knew why. He had intended, through a friend of a friend, to catch a 747 on a cattle flight to Saudi Arabia.

Bob Hunter, though, had been "too mean" to come, according to Jerry Garcia. "He wouldn't ➤

ADRIANBOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

Jerry and Carolyn Garcia, aka Mountain Girl

pay for his ticket," he laughed.

Garcia, looking more than ever like a Greek Orthodox patriarch now that his thick beard and hair are striped with grey – particularly as he never changed his black T-shirt and trousers – was consumed with happiness in his gentle, affectionate way. He, Hunter and bassist Phil Lesh of the band had been most particularly anxious to come to Egypt.

"IT doesn't matter if we play horrible, if everything breaks up — all the things that can go wrong from an aesthetic point of view to a technological point of view — all those things would be OK to me," he said.

"This place has really freed us from something that I am normally quite concerned with, which is just professional competence; if I'm touchy about anything, that's it. But this experience is greater than the elements of performance in a normal sense."

The venture was costing the Dead more than half a million dollars, their British manager, Alan Trist, had calculated – "We're broke!" Garcia threw his hands to the skies – but it was worth it for the Ultimate Prank, keeping alive the idea that the Grateful Dead is not about cranking out rock'n'roll, but about fun, about getting high. Disregard the expense if an ambition can be fulfilled; and the Dead had contemplated this ambition for 10 years.

"Egypt is the culmination of our start," said Garcia one hot, blustery afternoon as we drove together in a rackety taxi along a tributary of the Nile, heading for the ancient city of Memphis and the statue of Rameses II. Perhaps our vehicle recalled a paradoxical comparison with the Grateful Dead, for referring to the solo projects that in recent years have halted the steady progress of the band, he remarked that the Dead was like a fine old Duesenberg that is taken out on special occasions, and it was still ready to roll for a good while.

"We would've played here whether there was an audience or not," he went on. "But the reality of it, as it's unfolded, is that the audience has become as much a part of the show as Egypt, the pyramids – as the idea! If you were to think of this whole thing as a piece of concept art, rather than as a performance, they are full participants."

But a very expensive piece of concept art, I suggested.

"HEEEEY!" Garcia loosed out an infectious, gurgling laugh, a guilty admission of the whole crazy action.

We saw Rameses, and Garcia posed for some pictures beside a smaller version of the Great Sphinx. He was knowledgeable about pyramidology but he didn't buy the Erich Von Daniken trip, as one put it; in fact, Garcia did not appear to be the hippie dippy his legend has described ("We're not sentimental," said Bob Weir when asked by the publicist of his record company, Arista, if the Dead wouldn't like a group photo of themselves against the pyramids).

JERRY GARCIA IS HEFTED ALMOST BODILY ONTO THE CAMEL, STILL PROTESTING

As Garcia stood between the paws of the Sphinx, I mentioned that 20 people involved in the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb had died in violent or unusual circumstances.

"When they opened that tomb they were exposed to various pigments on the walls that had been sealed up for thousands of years," he replied. "You have to calculate the effect of being exposed to strange materials from another age."

We drove on to Sakkara and the Step Pyramid of King Zoser, the oldest of the Egyptian pyramids, passing on the dusty, broken road a lone hippie squatting with a book that he was searching intently; he did not look up. Garcia chattered on, excited about his proximity to history.

It was at Sakkara that we came up against the inflexibility of the Arab in his pursuit of the foreigner's Egyptian pounds.

A place more truly of the desert than Giza, which is hounded by coachloads of tourists, Sakkara is notable not only for its pyramid but for the 2500 BC tomb of Lord Ti and for the 24 granite sarcophagi of the sacred Apis-bulls. The wind blows the sand in changing patterns, and a little awe of the past enters your soul.

But baksheesh is baksheesh, wherever one goes in Egypt, and none are more merciless pursuers than the camel-drivers, although the young kids with their cheap King Farouk medallions and 50 piastre turquoise scarabs are as troublesome as mosquitoes clamorous for blood.

A FAVOURITE way to extract money from the unwary is to represent oneself as a guide or official, sometimes with a plastic identification card pinned to the con-man's lapel that looks authoritative as long as you can't read Arabic. On entering Cairo I was met after the customs area by a polite young guy who guaranteed me a room at the Sheraton, no problem, sir. He called some number, spoke a few confident words, then turned with a smile and declared that a room was waiting; only when I got there the desk clerks laughed and shook their heads because they had received no call, and certainly they had not a mattress to rest upon. I had arrived there with a driver recommended by the young guy, and he became conveniently obtuse. The deceit had been so complete that the man at the airport had said he would telephone the next day so that we could arrange a trip through the Nile Delta.

The camel-driver at Sakkara was not so much duplicitous as steely. A lean, tall, handsome Arab, whose name was Saeed, he took an immediate shine to Garcia. As a guide, official for once, led the way towards the Tomb of Ti, Saeed followed with a posse of camels and drivers and with insistent friendliness.

"Say cheese," he said to the photographer in the party.

OK, indulge the sucker, we thought. Cheese! Yes, very good English, nodding our heads.

"Hi ho Silver."

What?

"Hi ho Silver away! You American?"

Yeah, says Garcia.

"Me very good friend in California, Charles Sullivan. You know him? Teacher."

He fishes in his robe and brings out from a wallet a carefully preserved note written in biro. It purports to be from a professor at some Californian university and, in good but literal English, advises that Saeed here is a reliable guide.

"Well, whaddya know," laughs Garcia, handing it back.

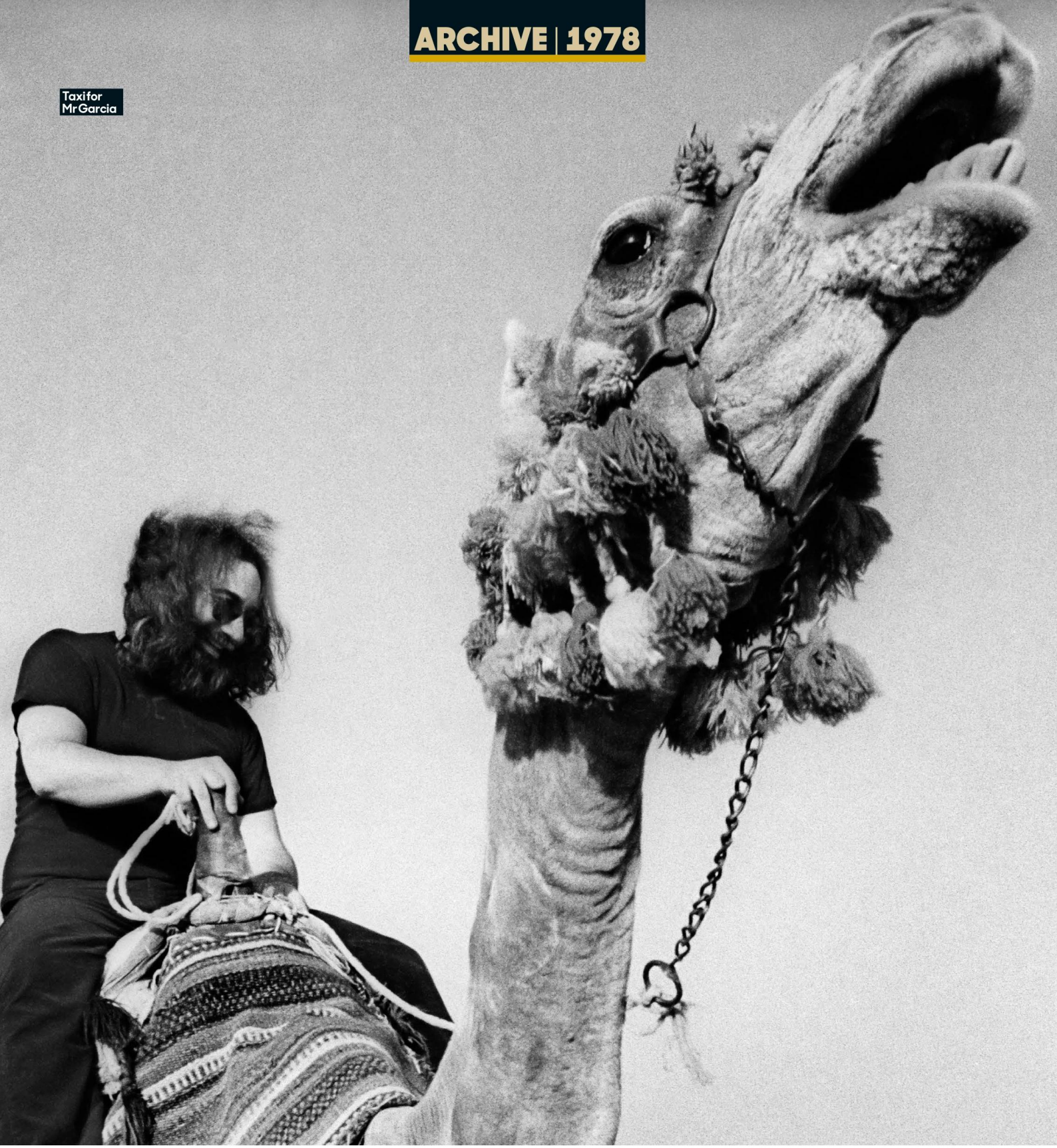
"You from California, too? This camel's name California, after my good friend. You ride him. You ride him, please."

GARCIA sputters, laughing in protest, but the driver has him by the arm in a fierce grip. "You ride him, please."

Look, I gotta get back and do a show. We're only here for a few pictures. "You'll like, you'll see."

ADRIAN BOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

Taxi for Mr Garcia



Garcia is hefted almost bodily onto the camel, still protesting. The driver shows his teeth. Another victory. And then the other drivers start nudging the rest of us. "You want camel? Ride to pyramid? Only five minutes."

And so resolve is beaten down, because you are up against the implacable. It's the game in Egypt, and the tourist never wins. And maybe he shouldn't. As Bill Graham points out, you're arguing away, and then you suddenly realise that he is poor and you are rich in comparison.

Nothing could spoil Egypt for Garcia, anyway. A bearish figure, snuffling loudly from a cold, he dismounted with a grin and shook Saeed's hand that had been thrust at him.

"You happy?"

"I'm happy," laughed Garcia.

"I'm happy if you're happy too," grinned the driver. Surely he could not have heard of Julie Andrews?

But as a matter of fact, everyone was pretty happy, after all.

THE EGYPTIAN BOOKING OF THE DEAD

THE GRATEFUL Dead may have wanted to perform in Egypt for many years, but it took an Englishman to set the ball rolling and a middle-aged, straight American couple to put that ball firmly in the lap of the Egyptian government.

Jonathan Wallace is in his thirties and the editor of the London-based *Middle East Economic Digest*. Last year in California, he casually suggested to Robert Hunter, the Dead's lyricist, whom he had met through Alan Trist, that it might be possible for the band to play before the pyramids, an exploit that before had seemed only a pipedream in the bowl of a hash pipe.

He introduced them to Joseph and Lois Malone of Middle East Research Associates Inc in Washington, an organisation which advises Americans on projects in the Middle East, ➤

ADRIAN BOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

Eclipsing the competition: the Dead on stage, September '78

ADRIANBOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

usually of an educational nature. They confirmed the possibility, and after exchanges between Egypt and America the Malones went to Cairo this spring with Phil Lesh for two weeks.

APPARENTLY, the project went as high as Anwar Sadat, for whose wife's charity for the handicapped some of the concert money has eventually gone (as well as for the restoration and maintenance of Egyptian antiquities). The Dead themselves, however, dealt as little as possible with the Carter administration, which Garcia says did not want to get too involved "in case something went wrong".

The original plan was to play on September 14 and 15 in Giza, and then to attempt a further date in Luxor in the Valley of the Kings. But then the band discovered that on September 16, which was last Saturday, there would be an eclipse of the full moon, a rare occurrence; and to give a local flavour to the event a protégé of drummer Mickey Hart, the Nubian oud player Hamza el-Din, was added to the bill.

With the dates set up, they hired The Who's sound people because of the expense of transporting equipment from San Francisco, and late in August five trucks left England for the port of Alexandria via Venice. The venality of the Egyptians was such, claims the crew, that they were held up for three days in Alexandria before they had permission to leave for Cairo; similarly, the use of the lights of the son et lumière had to be restricted to dimly lighting the Sphinx and three pyramids behind because the authorities wanted $10,000.

The Manor Mobile was also hired, and they set off for Cairo at the end of the first week of September. Each of the subsequent three shows was recorded, and Arista hope to release a live album next March.

From America, ABC and CBS television news flew in, and on the last night Egyptian TV filmed a segment.

Still, away from Giza there was little evidence that the Dead were carving a small place in history while Begin and Sadat tussled with each other at Camp David. Posters had been put up, it was said, but had been immediately torn down, perhaps as souvenirs.

A HIPPIE from an underground paper in San Francisco arrived and said it was not even a big deal in the Dead's hometown. And the Dead themselves confessed that Clive Davis, the boss of Arista, whom Garcia said had signed them because "he likes to be associated with elements of integrity", was indifferent about the venture.

"He couldn't care less; he wants us to sell records. But our thing is not that we are platinum sellers, it's because of some other value that he feels that we have."

An ordinary American, sitting in the lobby of Cairo's Lido Hotel, was incredulous that rock concerts were taking place.

"The Grateful Dead playing here? In Cairo? Hey, honey," he turned to his mousey wife. "You hear that? The Grateful Dead are playing here. Well, I'll be damned."

It turned out, however, that the whole American School in Cairo knew all about the event. Each night young blonde girls, their hair garlanded with orange blossom, turned up with shaggy-haired but fresh-faced beaux, and whooped and shrieked just like it was Monterey all over again. The reek of hashish sharpened the air, and large brown and green bottles of Egyptian Stella beer, at more than £1 each from the Pavilion de Cheops, were glugged back.

The backpacking hippies and the freaks in their galabias had a happy madness in their eyes, and the splaying feet and arms revived memories that longhairs never could really dance. At each concert there were never less than 1,000 people, and on the last night there was maybe as many as the 2,000 that the Dead had expected.

As for the Egyptians, perhaps many of them had gone out of curiosity or for a little baksheesh. The favourite western music in Cairo is Abba and Boney M; as with the rest of the Middle East, disco is the most popular form.

BY Saturday, however, the local cats were the most boisterous members of the audience, bumping against each other as if they had been born to pogo, climbing on each other's shoulders to dance, and ululating peculiarly, like Bedouin tribesmen at a camel

round-up. The atmosphere was friendly, but very charged; you sensed that in less responsible hands than the Dead's their excitement might boil over.

But Garcia, his hair in elastic bands so that two pigtails stuck out at the sides like Mopsy's, beamed benignly while all around him on stage the stoned foolishness of the Pranksters resounded in wails over the microphones, and the playing of Arabian percussion instruments. Kesey, the most perfect Arab in white headdress and robes, orchestrated the effects, and another Prankster filmed it all on Super 8mm, a home movie of the pyramids with a difference.

Weir, who had had trouble on the first night with his guitar, was now having fun with his slide playing and some tough rock'n'roll singing, while Lesh, not the funkiest of bass players, nevertheless leapt exuberantly around. Behind the drumkits Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, playing with his left hand in a cast owing to a fall from a horse, had a long set-piece together which included Hart on steel drum. Donna Godchaux swung her hair prettily around her waist; only her husband, Keith, whose keyboards were always unaccountably buried in the mix, seemed unaffected by the general euphoria: the archetypically somnolent hippie.

Each night the band played for four hours or more, into the early morning. On the final night they continued until past 3am, as the moon cast off its eclipsing shadow and rose high above the Sphinx, and the pyramids looked like three wedges of scaly cheese.

Fireworks fizzed bravely on the top of Chephren's tomb. Chuck Kesey waved aloft the Pranksters' flag. And Weir launched into a furious version of "Reelin' And Rockin'".

What a crazy sound! And they never stopped rockin' till the moon went down.

THE ELECTRIC KOOL-AID EL CID TEST

SAHARA City ("Sahara" literally means "desert") is an hour away on horseback from the Pyramid of Cheops. It is a small town in the desert, consisting principally of two enormous tents which function as nightclubs with music and belly dancers.

By taxi it is only 15 minutes, and I got there early, in time to catch the tail-end of a wedding party whose music and laughter was streaming from one tent. It was just after 3am on Sunday.

The place was now less than half-full, but an accordion-led band was supporting a succession of sinuous dancers who writhed around the central stage to the claps and cheers of remarkably good-humoured Egyptians – considering the passage of alcohol, that is.

The tent... smelled damp and musty, and a chill night breeze blew in from the desert through rips in the gauze windows. An army of cats appeared to be on the prowl; shapes slinking under tables in a search for dropped pieces of lamb.

Bob Weir was the first to arrive by horse from the pyramids, and gradually he was joined by others of the Dead entourage who had crossed the desert on camel and horse. The beasts, growing in number by the minute, were tethered or held by their Arab masters, and the air was strong with their breath and hot dung.

It was the final prank of the Dead's Egyptian tour — a celebration of their performances, that

"GET OUT THE HUBBLY BUBBLY," ONE MEMBER OF THE ROAD CREW URGED AN ARAB

their nerve hadn't failed them — to earn the adventure through by dining as Arabs on kufta broiled on the spit and dolma, a meat hash delicacy baked in lime leaves, and be served like princes and princesses by liveried Egyptians. And the fact that Bill Graham was footing the bill, much as he might have done after a performance at Winterland, merely accentuated the incongruous humour.

OUT of the night arrived Garcia at the head of a cavalcade, and the wedding guests had melted away and the desert was rosy with dawn by the time the Dead's party was under way.

When in Egypt: Ken Kesey at the Dead's show

The whole shebang moved out into a large forecourt, and fat joints miraculously appeared from the folds of galabias. "Get out the hubbly bubbly," one balding, round-stomached member of the road crew urged an Arab horseman, who smiled slyly through a big gap in his front teeth; and soon tokes were being exchanged, and small clay pipes sucked upon.

Too zonked to walk, people sat on the edge of the forecourt's low plateau and watched the desert fill up with light. Others were hyperactive. Bill Graham raced Mickey Hart carrying trays loaded with lagers, and then Hart tried to emulate the horse tricks of a young Arab boy, dressed in bright green, who had been performing on a large grey. The desert was suddenly alive with riders tearing across in balls of dust. The scene began to assume the proportions of what I always imagined about the Pranksters' trips: an elusive, anarchic air, yet fundamentally benevolent.

Kesey himself, still in Arab dress, sat at a crowded table with Garcia. Although not tall, he is very solidly built, and he radiates immense power, so that it was hard to keep your eyes off him.

After all, Tom Wolfe has described him best. He wrote: "His jaw and chin are massive. He looks a little like Paul Newman, except that he is more muscular, has thicker skin, and he has tight blond curls boiling up around his head. His hair is almost gone on top, but somehow that goes all right with his big neck and general wrestler's build. Then he smiles slightly. It's curious, he doesn't have a line in his face. After all the chasing and hassling – he looks like the third week at the Sauna Spa."

A decade later, Kesey has not appreciably changed. His face, which was the only part of him visible, had the round smoothness of a heavy boulder. A rock of strength, but also a dangerous force.

I gave up thinking about it, though – too tired and stoned to take everything in. The same guy was still calling for a hubbly bubbly. I got in the taxi, which had waited for me through the night, and set off for the last time to the Mena House. Halfway back I realised it was my birthday, too.

Garcia and Weir joined by local musicians

ADRIANBOOT/URBANIMAGE.TV

GRATEFUL DEAD

SHAKEDOWN STREET

RELEASED NOVEMBER 15, 1978

On which the Dead hook up with Lowell George, and actively try to sell out, fuelled by brandy and "Peruvian marching powder". The result? Disco Dead! BY PAUL MOODY

PROOF that the Grateful Dead were fading from cultural relevance came at their 1977 New Year's Eve show at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom. During pre-show entertainment including "freak volleyball" and a 16mm showing of The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* – first aired in 1967 – fans were handed a flyer informing them that the band's second set would begin not on the stroke of 12, as was customary, but at half-past midnight. While this was ostensibly to accommodate the wishes of late-running promoter Bill Graham – who eventually introduced the band astride a Harley-Davidson, dressed as a decrepit Uncle Sam – it had ironic significance for a band who had fallen behind the times.

Exactly a fortnight later, the Sex Pistols played their final gig in the same venue, Johnny Rotten's parting shot, "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?" sending shock waves through a '70s rock scene which had become defined by complacency. The disco craze spawned by the soundtrack of 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*, meanwhile, had also divided pop music fans in the United States, with "Disco sucks!" becoming a popular catchphrase – even while heavyweights like The Rolling Stones changed course to stay relevant, scoring an international hit in May with "Miss You".

For the Dead, it was a wake-up call too loud to ignore. Eager to provide new paymaster Arista with a crossover hit and loath to repeat their experience with Keith Olsen recording *Terrapin Station*, they hired as producer for the follow-up someone they saw as a kindred spirit – Lowell George. A former child prodigy whose band Little Feat combined sprawling live shows with finely honed albums, the 33-year-old Californian seemed a perfect fit.

However, when sessions began in August 1978 at their practice space-cum-clubhouse, Club Le Front, they quickly fell victim to the band's – and George's – recreational habits. "He did as good a job as anyone," recalled Bob Weir. "But there was far too much chemical adventure and far too much drinking. Peruvian marching powder and brandy."

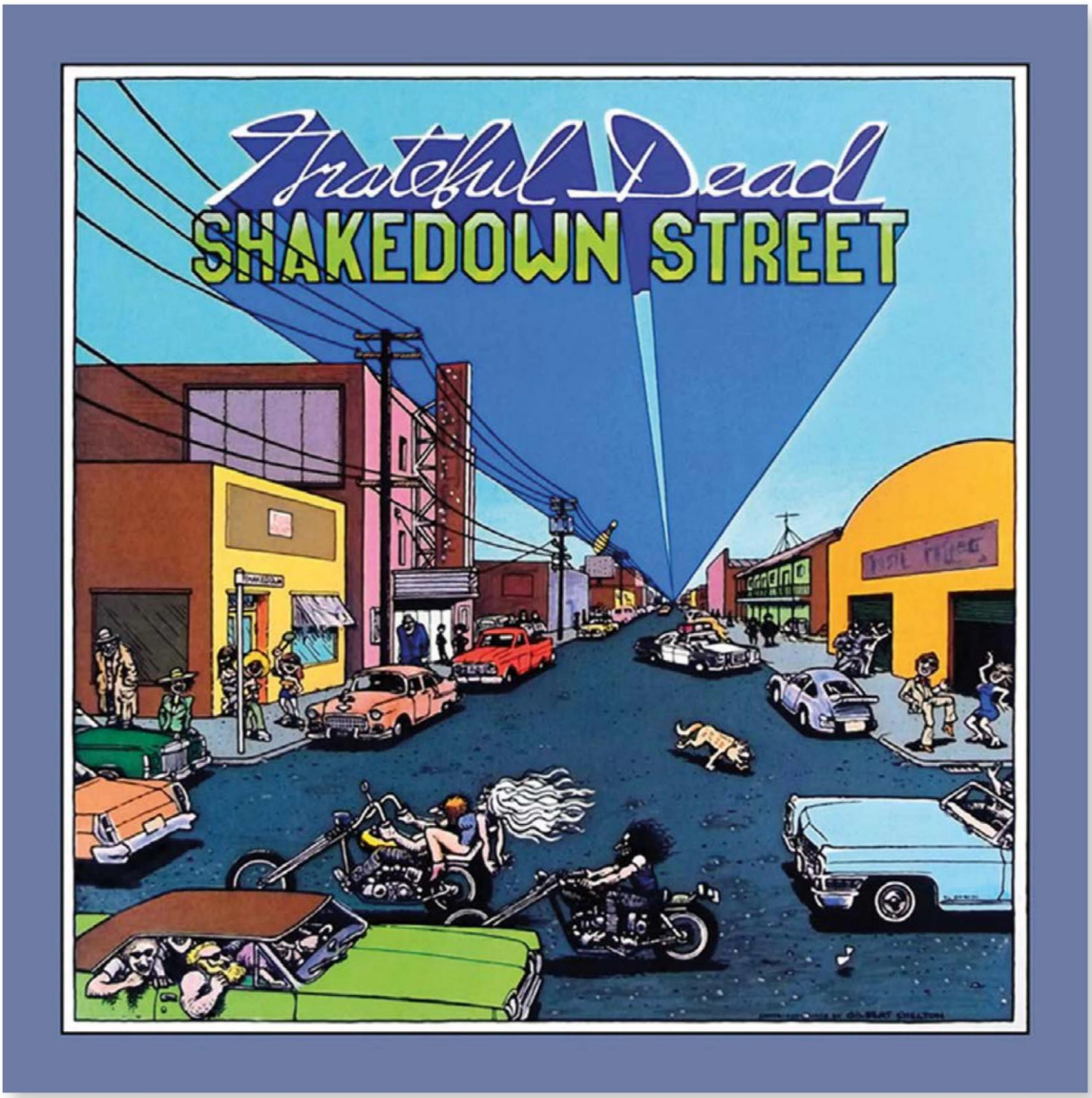
The result, *Shakedown Street*, remains one of the most maligned albums in the Dead's entire catalogue. Savaged by critics – it was called, among other things, "a rambling, shambling, under-exercised goddamn yawn" and "the worst Dead album ever" – it was also damned by fans as "Disco Dead" – a shameless attempt to clamber aboard the mirrorball bandwagon. The sleeve featured a depiction of the studio's down-at-heel San Rafael neighbourhood by Furry Freak Brothers artist Gilbert Shelton, further giving the impression the Dead were simply goofing off.

However, while it is – to say the least – uneven, *Shakedown Street* still has plenty going for it. As well as containing three songs that would become setlist staples – a reggae-tinged "Fire On The Mountain", "I Need A Miracle" and Hunter-Garcia's novel take on traditional folk tune "Stagger Lee" – it also comes with the sense of a band cutting loose and having fun.

"Lowell was really like a member of the band," recalled

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The employment of noted derelict Lowell George in a production capacity serves to toughen-up the Dead sound, as much as such a thing is possible. On 'I Need A Miracle' and 'All New Minglewood Blues' it indeed proves possible, but not exactly desirable. Side one stays on the tracks after a slow start... The disco emphasis (I kid not) of the title cut is no blasphemy, more like part two of 'Eyes Of The World'. Side two barely moves. I find myself for the first time appreciating a Donna Godchaux tune, which casts a poor taint on the quality of the cuts that surround it."
PAUL RAMBALI, NME, DECEMBER 2, 1978



TRACKMARKS

1. Good Lovin' ★★
2. France ★★★
3. Shakedown Street ★★★
4. Serengetti ★★
5. Fire On The Mountain ★★★
6. I Need A Miracle ★★★
7. From The Heart Of Me ★★★
8. Stagger Lee ★★★
9. All New Minglewood Blues ★★★★
10. If I Had The World To Give ★★★

Label: Arista
Producer: Lowell George
Recorded: Club Le Front, San Rafael, California; Meta Tantay, Carlin, Nevada
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (lead guitar), Bob Weir (rhythm guitar), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Mickey Hart (drums), Phil Lesh (bass), Keith Godchaux (keyboards), Donna Jean Godchaux (vocals), Lowell George (vocals), Matthew Kelly (harp), Jordan Amarantha (percussion), Steve Schuster (horns), Hamza El Din (various)
Highest chart position: UK – ; US 41

Bill Kreutzmann of George's hands-on approach. "If we were working on a song and he didn't feel it was going right, he'd just grab a guitar and come into the studio and show us how he felt it."

Clearly inspired by the mercurial George, as well as their own prodigious cocaine use, "I Need A Miracle" and an update of Noah Lewis's jug-band classic "All New Minglewood Blues" (previously covered on their debut) – both sung by Weir – are sizzling R&B workouts, the polyrhythmic assault of Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart interlocking perfectly with Lesh's bass and Garcia's needle-sharp lead lines.

While it's undoubtedly a curio in the Dead back catalogue, a Steely Dan-ish "France" perfectly showcases the vocal abilities of Donna Jean Godchaux, the tongue-in-cheek lyric ("*Oh, these folks don't ever sleep 'til they're passed out in the street*") offset by Garcia's sparkling Spanish guitar and – yes – steel drums (unsurprisingly it was never played live). While Garcia and Hunter's "If I Had The World To Give" is similarly un-Dead like, it's no less enjoyable, being a tender, Lennon-esque ballad prompted by a fan telling Hunter that he only ever wrote lyrics "by guys for guys".

Sure, there are some obvious fillers – "Serengetti" is an unremarkable percussive workout and Donna Jean's "From The Heart Of Me" feels woefully out of place – but the disjointed feel can at least be attributed to how the album was recorded. Having truncated sessions to play three dates in front of the Great Sphinx of Giza in Egypt in mid-September, despite Kreutzmann having broken an arm playing basketball, the band returned to the studio to discover that the ailing George was no longer available. With touring commitments looming, they turned to Jerry Garcia Band bassist John Kahn to take over production duties while simultaneously sitting in for the troubled Keith Godchaux on organ. Little wonder that a version of The Young Rascals' hit "Good Lovin'" finds them sounding utterly exhausted (ironically, an outtake of George singing the lead is far superior).

IT COMES WITH THE SENSE OF A BAND CUTTING LOOSE

It made a strange kind of sense, then, that such an ill-starred album should have been so poorly received on its arrival in November 1978, the height of new wave. "With few exceptions, *Shakedown Street*, rife with blind intersections, comes across as an artistic dead end," wrote *Rolling Stone*. Despite an appearance on *Saturday Night Live* in the week of release, it was the Dead's first studio effort to fail to reach the Top 40 since 1969's *Aoxomoxoa*.

"We were trying to sell out: 'Oh, let's make a single and get on the radio,'" Hart later admitted. "We failed miserably once again. I mean, we could never sell out even if we tried – and we tried."

It was the end of an era. By the following June, Lowell George would be dead from an accidental cocaine overdose, while Keith Godchaux – having left the Dead with wife Donna by mutual agreement in February 1979 – died in a car crash less than a year later, at 32. It was time for a new Dead for a new decade. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

GO TO HEAVEN

RELEASED APRIL 28, 1980

The curse of Arista strikes again. Creative shifts and cocaine send the Dead's 11th hurtling into '80s AOR hell. With one angelic saving grace. *BY* NICK HASTED

JERRY Garcia's long hair blows windswept behind him, and Bob Weir looks like a bashful matinee idol, mercifully flashing less chest hair than Bill Kreutzmann and Phil Lesh. New boy Brent Mydland peers inscrutably behind Garcia, and Mickey Hart stares hopefully towards something only he can see. The white suits look like dress-code requirements for a Miami nightclub catering to hippies turned '80s breadheads.

Everyone is grinning at a joke they were too disorganised to tell: this was meant to be the Dead up in the heaven of their new album's title, but the back sleeve set to show them as contrasting hobos in a skid row hell was never shot. What the world saw instead was a new low in the Dead's disconnect from the times, and their own presumed values. Jerry Garcia as the Travolta of a Saturday-night fever dream was no-one's idea of a good time. *Go To Heaven* was dead on arrival, and the band's Arista curse dragged on.

In fact, Mydland's controversial debut as keyboardist after Keith Godchaux quit introduced a stable, decade-long lineup that would eventually see the Dead grow to new commercial heights. *Go To Heaven* also introduced a new concert staple, "Althea", and was rarely the sellout fans putting the shocking sleeve back in the rack must have feared.

"I don't think I was really aware of their music at all at that point," producer Gary Lyons, an Englishman still new to the States, confessed to Garcia biographer Blair Jackson. But he wasn't a stoner-wrangling suit like Keith Olsen on *Terrapin Station*, or intent on imposing the clipped AOR menace of his recent Foreigner hit "Cold As Ice" on the band. "They wanted to record it essentially live in the studio with the six of them playing at once, and then do overdubs later. I liked to work that way."

Garcia was happy too. "I think he's the best producer we've had yet in terms of really having a commitment to the group," he told *Relix* magazine. "He's not a standoffish guy... [*with*] a lot of English rock'n'roll affectations." Garcia's solos were compiled from multiple takes or used complete, depending what he came up with. As overdubs continued, Lyons found himself commuting between sessions with a coke-fuelled Aerosmith and mellow pot vibes back in Marin County.

Garcia's own coke consumption was hitting worrying levels by now, though, and *Go To Heaven* revealed a shifting creative axis. Weir was the dominant writer and singer, and even Mydland's contributions almost equalled the Dead's presumed head. Both pushed the album into unfamiliar zones. Two Weir/Barlow tracks, "Lost Sailor" and "Saint Of Circumstance", were literal yacht-rock, riffing on nautical metaphors for existence. The former was pleasantly drifting and improvisatory, its atmosphere upmarket but with a crystalline edge, like an Elmore Leonard-scripted, acid-dosed *Miami Vice* episode. "Saint Of Circumstance" had rhythmically stiff choruses with slippery verses, a strangely staccato, stop-time structure and jazzy chord sequences, existing in an odd adjunct of AOR.

The third Weir/Barlow song, "Feel Like A Stranger", was closer to the dubious sleeve, as Weir ventured "*out on the*

TRACKMARKS

1. Alabama Getaway ★★★
2. Far From Me ★★
3. Althea ★★★★★
4. Feel Like A Stranger ★★
5. Lost Sailor ★★★
6. Saint Of Circumstance ★★★
7. Antwerp's Placebo (The Plumber) ★★
8. Easy To Love You ★★
9. Don't Ease Me In ★★

Label: Arista
Producer: Gary Lyons
Recorded: Club Front, San Rafael, California
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (vocals, guitar), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Phil Lesh (bass), Brent Mydland (keyboards, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals)
Highest chart position: UK –; US 23

neon avenue" accompanied by parping synth-brass and wah-wah. "*Inside you're burning, I can see clear through,*" he informs his lucky pick-up, glum funk burbling beneath him. "*It's gonna be a long, long crazy night.*" Well, a long night, anyway.

If this Dead expedition into suburban discoland was ill-advised, Mydland's two songs were equally straight. "The stuff I write isn't necessarily lyrically Grateful Dead," he reflected to Blair Jackson "[*It's*] a little tight to the vest, as opposed to painting images in your mind." "Far From Me" considered a love gone wrong, with crashing snares and sweet, late-Beatles harmonies. Mydland's big, yearning vocal, symptomatic of the AOR times, was compared to Michael McDonald, and in truth the studio Dead and Doobies weren't so distant now. But "Far From Me" was melodically more interesting than the norm, and Mydland's other effort, "Easy To Love You", layered on some of the multiple keyboards with which he would expand the Dead's palette. He already looked an asset.

Robert Hunter, meanwhile, was getting pissed off. "Did I feel relieved that someone was taking my place?" he spat, when *Dark Star*'s interviewer innocently enthused about the new arrangements. "No, not at all!" He managed two lyrics on *Go To Heaven*. First single "Alabama Getaway" was a straightforward, Berry-esque rocker about enigmatic desperados, with a few of the usual Hunter twists: "*23rd Psalm major-domo, reserve me a table for three/Down in the valley of the shadow/Just you, Alabama and me.*" And

THE STUDIO DEAD AND DOOBIES WEREN'T SO DISTANT NOW

then, in amongst all *Go To Heaven*'s finally unexceptional twists in the new decade's wind, there was "Althea".

From the first high-piping, languidly skipping notes of Garcia's guitar, we are home. Slide guitar cries, too, out in the swamp, and Garcia murmurs the words with an odd, hitching rhythm, some dropping nearly out of earshot, the mysterious space we've entered deepening. The mystery was what Garcia always got from Hunter, editing his Walter Scott-worshipping stanzas into oblique suggestions, strange skeletons that danced only for the Dead.

Here, Garcia's paranoid protagonist fears that "*treachery is tearing me limb from limb*", before Althea commandeers the dialogue, and tears him a strip. "The name 'Ophelia' appears in it," Hunter explained. "Althea is talking to this whining, whimpering, egotistical maniac... [*He's*] the Hamlet character." "*Ain't nobody messing with you but you,*" she tells this fool. "*Your friends are getting most concerned.*" She could have been talking to Garcia himself, as the white powder grew mountainous backstage that year, and onlookers began to worry. Here, though, his solos still jabbed and stung.

So magic flowed just once on *Go To Heaven*. It sold even worse than the Dead's previous Arista albums. Clive Davis's latest gamble on reupholstering old '60s lags for slicker times (which paid off with The Kinks) had begun to look a losing bet. The Dead themselves disgustedly swore off the studio for the next seven years. There would be much pain in the interim, and it would need something special to drag them back. ●

GRATEFUL DEAD

IN THE DARK

RELEASED JULY 6, 1987

Songs of middle-age solidarity light up the CD era and reach a new generation of wild young Deadheads. BY STEPHEN DEUSNER

In The Dark was an album of firsts for the Grateful Dead. It was their first collection of new material in seven years, and their first official release in six. It was their first studio album to get an immediate CD release and, more bizarrely, their first to go double platinum. They made their first music video, a comic performance clip for "Touch Of Grey", which peaked at No 9. After 22 years together, 11 albums, and God only knows how many live shows and subsequent bootlegs, the most thoroughly documented band in American history scored their first Top 40 single.

The Grateful Dead suddenly had new life, and they weren't alone. Just months after the band had released *Go To Heaven* in 1980, a new cable channel debuted in the US dedicated to playing the latest music videos. Many predicted that Music Television – or, for short, MTV – would eradicate all those unphotogenic, hirsute rockers from the 1960s and '70s, who had enjoyed great success on the non-visual medium of radio, and in their place it would install a new generation of young, hip stars. And that's exactly what happened throughout the first half the 1980s. But in the second half, in parallel with reissues of classic albums on this new format called the CD, a wave of Boomer acts enjoyed the kind of hits that once seemed impossible: Paul Simon and The Moody Blues in 1986, followed by George Harrison, Smokey Robinson, The Beach Boys, Roy Orbison, and rustic supergroup the Traveling Wilburys. With the obvious exception of Jefferson Starship, none of these fortysomethings were embarrassing themselves either.

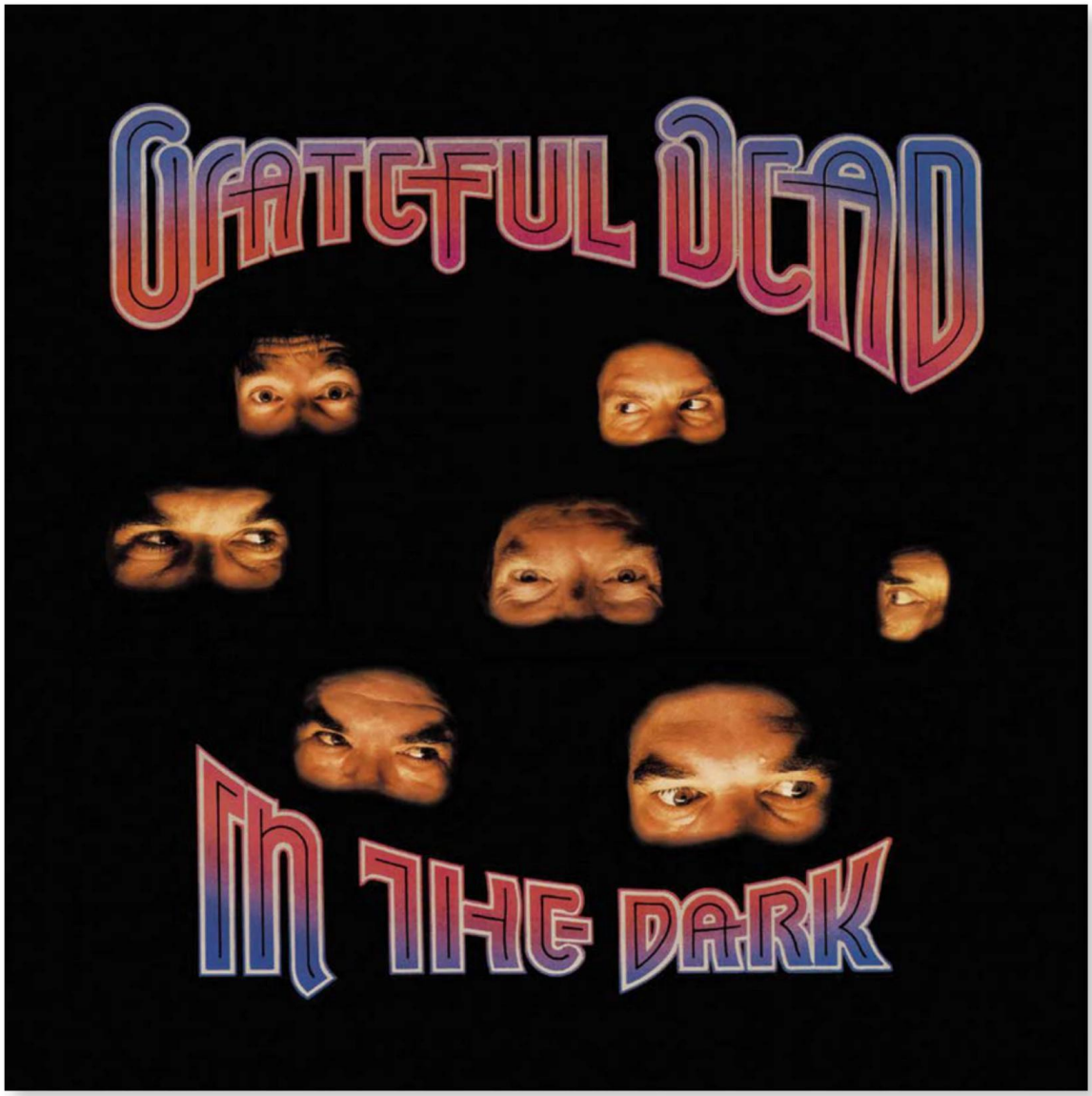
CRITICS' VERDICT

"This is their first album for seven years... A lot of agony has rippled through this fine band's career since then. At one point lead guru Jerry Garca was almost snatched away from them by the Reaper due to a severe drug problem. The best piece of *In The Dark* refers abstractedly to this. 'Black Muddy River' is the kind of Garcia/Robert Hunter collaboration which used to fill their previous recorded output, a song which dares to look back into the whirling black vortex through which Garcia had tumbled."
EDWIN POUNCEY, NME, SEPT 5, 1987

The Grateful Dead were far and away the unlikeliest '60s refugees to make that list. For one thing, they weren't really a singles band. Nor were they truly an albums band, either. They were primarily a live act, having inspired a generation to hit the road in microbus convoys and distribute a constant stream of live bootlegs. What had once been a hippie roadshow had become a lucrative industry, even as the band continued to lose estimated millions due to unofficial merch sales and tape trading. "We're a straight business now," drummer/CFO Bill Kreutzmann told *Forbes* magazine in May 1987.

That's one of the many reasons why, after the fiasco of 1980's lacklustre *Go To Heaven*, the band decided to record *In The Dark* not in their studio but at Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium in San Rafael, California – not far from where they had established their business offices. They'd been honing these new songs on the road for a few years, so it made sense to record them on a stage. They set up their gear and put on a show for an audience of empty seats, with co-producer John Cutler capturing performances that showcase the Grateful Dead's casual chemistry. The album percolates with a barely contained energy, as they two-step through the laidback West Coast blues of "When Push Comes To Shove" and churn a tense, sunlit noir groove on "West LA Fadeaway".

Despite some elements that are now as dated as parachute pants, the Dead weren't really trying to sound



TRACKMARKS

1. Touch Of Grey ★★★★★
2. Hell In A Bucket ★★★★
3. When Push Comes To Shove ★★★
4. West LA Fadeaway ★★★
5. Tons Of Steel ★★
6. Throwing Stones ★★★
7. Black Muddy River ★★★★★

Label: Arista
Recorded at: Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium, San Rafael, CA
Produced by: Jerry Garcia, John Cutler
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (guitar, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals), Brent Mydland (keyboards, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion)
Highest chart position: UK 57 ; US 6

young. In fact, *In The Dark* embraces middle age as a legitimate songwriting subject, and they sing about the ache in their bones and what they assumed would be lifelong irrelevance with bemusement, especially on the chagrinned "Hell In A Bucket". "*I might be going to hell in a bucket, babe*," 40-year-old Bob Weir sings, "*but at least I'm enjoying the ride*". And closer "Black Muddy River" might be their most poignant meditation on mortality – a moving hymn to all the dreams and all the songs that get left behind. "*When the strings of my heart begin to sever/And stones fall from my eyes instead of tears*," sings 45-year-old Jerry Garcia, who would be dead in eight years' time, "*I will walk alone by the black muddy river/And dream me a dream of my own*."

Most impressively, they managed to sneak such thoughts onto the radio with "Touch Of Grey", Robert Hunter's poignant anthem of perseverance. Perhaps those middle-aged hippies needed to sing along with that reassuring chorus: "*I will get by, I will survive*". And when the Grateful Dead change up that pronoun towards the end of the song, switching that "*I*" to a "*we*", they were signalling that this ageing generation might actually survive with their ideals intact, that their revolution was not for nothing. But the secret to the song's success wasn't its resonance with parents, but its appeal to kids who maybe weren't even alive when the Dead strummed the first chords of "The Golden Road (To Unlimited Devotion)" 20 years prior.

"TOUCH OF GREY" DIDN'T JUST APPEAL TO THE PARENTS BUT TO THE KIDS

And those new fans were the unexpected and often unpredictable byproduct of this new success. They inundated the Grateful Dead's concerts and proved largely ignorant of the holy rituals that typically took place within those sacrosanct places. They were taking new drugs, behaving boisterously, destroying property, and harshing many a mellow. They wanted to hear the hit rather than a 20-minute extrapolation of "Dire Wolf". Tensions between the old and the young ran so high that the band issued a statement: "The Grateful Dead has an ugly, dangerous problem at its door, a situation bad enough to put our future as a touring band in doubt... Part of our audience is making us unwelcome at show site after show site with insensitive behaviour, including flagrant consumption of illegal substances (and alcohol), littering, and general disturbances of the environment."

As shocking as it was that illegal substances were being consumed at Dead shows, that influx of new fans kept the band relevant well into the 1990s, long after many of their contemporaries had slipped back into the nostalgia circuit. The Dead never matched the commercial success of *In The Dark*, but they had already attracted a young generation of listeners who would continue to follow the band and trade the tapes for many years to come. In retrospect, "Touch Of Grey" may have been the most accidentally prophetic song they ever played: that was how they got by; that was how they survived. ●

Keep on truckin': the Grateful Dead turn the Alpine Valley Music Theatre, East Troy, Wisconsin, into a festival site, July 23, 1989

"We're one of the few adventures you can still have in America"

Out in the "dreamland" of late-'80s success, the Grateful Dead have become a travelling carnival, their blissed-out followers invading the minds and lawns of the US heartlands in their fight for the spirit of America. At the anti-establishment's HQ, Steve Sutherland hears tales of their unruly fanbase, and also their psychedelic DNA, insect experiments, cinematic forays and visits to Dylan's baronial pile. But where do you land from the ultimate high? "Whatever freedom is," JERRY GARCIA insists, "we're still part of that."

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

MELODY MAKER MAY 6/13, 1989

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD Michael Fane was shot dead by cops last weekend for causing a disturbance in a restaurant. His mother said he'd been acting kinda strange since he took 100 tabs of acid nine months earlier at a Grateful Dead concert, an experience that convinced him Jerry Garcia was God.

"Jeez, nobody's called me God lately," says Garcia, examining the newspaper clipping on the wall of the Dead's San Rafael office. "And anyway, nobody takes 100 tabs any more. I mean, how would they know? ...98 ...99 ...100! You'd never get to counting!"

The article goes on to say that Michael Fane's mother considers the Grateful Dead as an evil organisation that trades off a drug-taking myth, encouraging youngsters into their thrall for profit. Garcia considers writing to her – "You had him for 19 years, lady, we had him for one night, who the hell is to blame?" – but is counselled against it. Still, the middle-aged woman manning the switchboard is moved to say, "The strongest thing we take around here any more is coffee." Then she gets down to organising tickets to see Duran Duran.

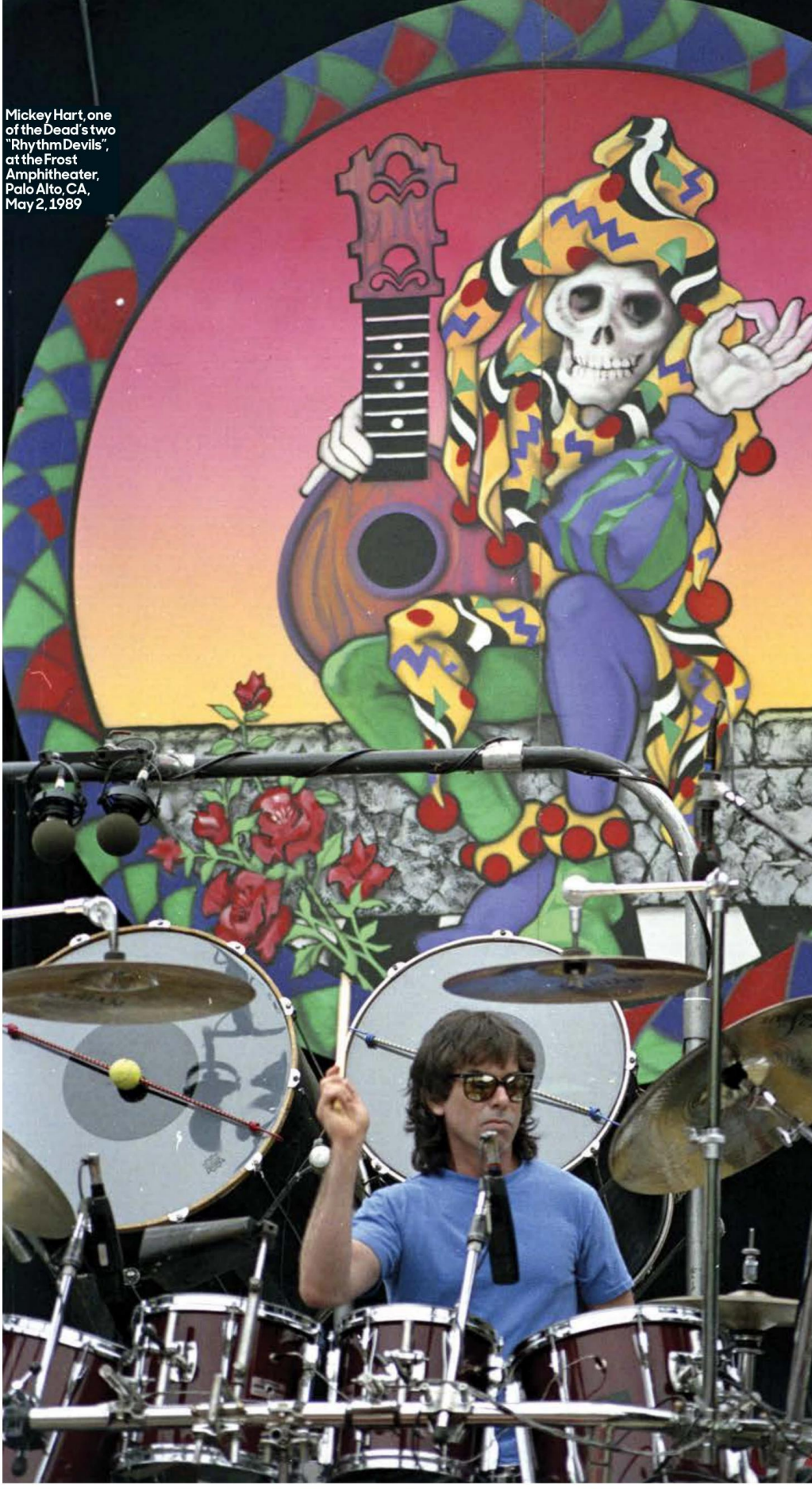
As I examine the other clippings on the wall – Greenpeace posters, a flyer for Garcia's solo show tomorrow night at the Frisco Gift Center, an article explaining how the Oakland Kaiser Convention Center has cancelled a Dead show because the authorities fear that the fans will camp out, a letter from a gay Deadhead who's HIV positive thanking the band for their support and urging them to undertake further benefits, the story of a guy who's embezzled four grand from a bank account by impersonating Bob Weir – various members of the Dead's 75 employees bustle by. Everybody greets everybody else and Garcia shares their gossip.

This is the nerve centre of the Grateful Dead, America's (perhaps even the world's) most established anti-establishment. This is where the band who started out 24 years ago as the riotous musical accompaniment to pioneering *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* author Ken Kesey's infamous Acid Tests (captured for posterity in Tom Wolfe's freewheeling account of the early hippies, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*) still attempt to maintain their principles of organised anarchy. They may have relinquished control of their own record company over a decade ago and *In The Dark* (their 1987 album and first studio offering for seven years) may have gone platinum on Arista, but the Grateful Dead still pride themselves on self-sufficiency, on providing a workable alternative lifestyle for the business setup they refer to as their extended family.

A combination of luck, nostalgia, rehab, progressive radio programming, determination, personal chemistry and an abiding adventurous musical yen to push things "FURTHUR" – the message emblazoned across the front of the Merry Pranksters' bus in the photo on the office wall is still, it seems, their motto – have conspired to shove the Grateful Dead into the '90s on a wave of astonishing success. While they're working on their as-yet-untitled new LP, the six band members are taking a break to hit the road as one of the biggest live attractions in rock. Forget Springsteen, forget U2, the kids flock to the Dead live in droves, in *caravans* – every show metamorphosing into a festival, an *event* as the crowd clamours for a part of their legendary mystical action.

From this office in San Rafael, the Dead deal with all their own concert ticketing and, last New Year's Eve, they blew the switchboard for the whole surrounding area, such was the multitude calling in for tickets to see them play.

"We're one of the few adventures you can still have in America," says Garcia by way of explanation. "For kids, our drug stories are like our fathers' war stories. Y'know, they can go on the road and it's like, 'Remember the time when we were trying to get to that Grateful Dead concert



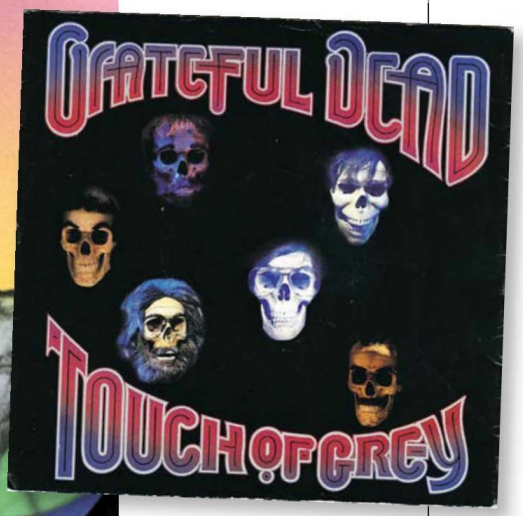
Mickey Hart, one of the Dead's two "Rhythm Devils", at the Frost Amphitheater, Palo Alto, CA, May 2, 1989

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

and we blew out two tyres and we had to hitchhike and remember that guy with the face and...'

"Following the Dead around is one of the few things they haven't legislated against – y'know, it's not totally illegal. We're still falling through the cracks..."

Jerry Garcia, the most celestial guitarist alive, is a veritable bear of a man, greying, scruffy, tanned, always chuckling. On July 10, 1986, he lapsed into a five-day diabetic coma after years of pretty heavy drug abuse (the doctors said his blood was like mud!), but he recovered, virtually learned to play guitar again from scratch and he relishes the Dead's current problems.



"It's kinda weird to *succeed out*. I mean, this is it. This is as far as you can go. Now we don't do one-nighters in the 18–20,000-seat coliseums, we do two or three and that's starting to be a problem because our fans come and camp out. It's not as if Deadheads are terribly destructive, it's just that, in some of the places we play – the Rosemont, which is a suburb in Chicago with a stadium – the residents are unhappy about people camping on the lawn and all this other stuff."

The last time the Dead reached a plateau of success was in 1974 and they couldn't handle it. Bob Weir, the rhythm guitarist who was 16 in 1963 when he co-founded Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions (the embryonic Dead) and who the fates seem to have preserved in the same way they preserved Cliff Richard, says they couldn't maintain the giant Alembic sound system they'd built to satiate their desire for amplified perfection.

"We would pull into town, set up, play, sell the place out, leave and move on to the next place having lost money. We were having to pay to play and, y'know, that's an untenable situation."

Their solution then was to quit touring a while; probably a mistake in retrospect.

"I think maybe, if we've learned anything, it's that perseverance furthers," says Weir. "So a small element of our following is kinda footloose. They tend to follow us around and camp out wherever they land, and many of them are a little on the... uh... blissed-out side and, y'know, their civility by normal standards, is a bit in question, which causes friction between us and local communities. We'll just have to come up with a solution."

Garcia is characteristically philosophical: "We've been here before on other levels, so this is really a metaphor for everything we've done in a way. We're in a place that we never expected to be and there's nothing defined here. So, at this point, we have to define what success means in some other way. We don't just wanna play outdoor stadia and restrict our audience to no fewer than 70,000 people at a shot and we wanna keep up the quality of the show and so on...

"The way I view it, we're kind of a utility service, more or less. You go there and you wanna do the best you can. You don't wanna burn anybody and, y'know, it should be fair. The idea that our audience is at risk of being busted or taken away because they camp out strikes me as terribly unfair.

"It remains for us to come up with any kind of good, conclusive direction. We almost always broadcast our shows now to alleviate the local crush, which takes up a certain amount of slack, but that's not really a solution. We've even thought of playing tremendously unattractive music for a couple of years and sort of thinning out the crowd! Those are the kind of ideas you start coming up with!

"We don't really know what we're doing, but we're determined to keep on playing. We're not about to quit."

> **"IT'S KINDA WEIRD TO *SUCCEED OUT*. I MEAN... THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU CAN GO"**
> JERRY GARCIA

Some of the Deadheads – as the diehard fanatics are universally known – are co-operating by bringing garbage bags to the shows and cleaning up afterwards, but as Garcia says, "It's still really a matter of figuring out a way to do it where we don't turn into cops."

The outlaw ethos is still of immense importance to the Grateful Dead. They've been busted a fair few times over the years and have duly celebrated their scuffles with the law in song. Even the name – surely one of the sweetest cosmic accidents ever (Garcia found the words juxtaposed in a dictionary at bassist Phil Lesh's house while smoking DMT) – has served to locate them on the outside. While they're still keeping on, a small flame of rebellion burns in the heart of every freak who traded in his kaftan for a career in accountancy.

"We're not threatening enough to hang yet, but they don't really like us," admits Garcia, jubilantly. "When the Grammys come up and the showbiz stuff, we're not part of it and we don't care. It sucks, it's lame – y'know, the music business, let's face it, is like carpet sales. Music is a wonderful thing and the music business really eats it."

I find the Dead's abiding popularity positively encouraging in a country which re-elected Reagan in the form of George Bush.

"Oh! Give me a break! I was shocked when Reagan was elected Governor of California! God damn! And then, as president, we were embarrassed by the guy. I mean, he wasn't even a good actor. And Bush is a total idiot. God, it's amazing to me, but that's not what America's about. The government falls into the hands of the people who love power and who are not bright enough to be rich and that's the way it's gonna be here. It doesn't work, really.

"America is still that experiment about how much can we get away with? The whole notion of whatever freedom is – we're still part of that. If the Grateful Dead get to define this next level of success, if we actually come up with some notion of how to deal with it, it will be a real boon for what America's really about in a sort of spiritual sense."

Such is the purity, perhaps the naivety with which the Grateful Dead face reality.

"Yeah, well I guess it is naive. But, for us, it's everyday. It's our lives. It's already gone way past any of our personal expectations, so we're out in dreamland. The Grateful Dead has turned into something totally incredible, and it hasn't been us steering it that way. It seems that, as long as there are people who want to experience something extraordinary and believe that it's possible, it is possible!

"I can't go against that, but I'll tell you, for the first 18 years I was sceptical – I always reserved something of myself just in case, y'know. But it's one of those things that, after a while... I dunno. I dunno what happens to people. When somebody reports to me that they have some wonderful experience connected to the music, I can relate to it because my finest moments have been in the audience listening to someone great play. It's just hard to relate being on this side of it.

"There really isn't anything fundamentally mysterious about what I play, but there's something about what the Grateful Dead does musically and something that the audience finds resonant and, I mean, nobody is more surprised than me that they don't walk out. Ha ha ha!

"For me, music is still very difficult. I still feel very much a person who's learning how to play, not a person who *plays*. Every time I take ➤

something new on, I realise how little I know and how much more there is. There are guys down there, kids who play 10 times as good as I do, y'know, eeeeargh – they're all over the place, sight reading through this complicated... y'know, it's intimidating. The whole level of technical excellence in the music world has gone bang."

It keeps you on your toes, I guess.

"Toes! I'm on my *knees* struggling to keep up! Still, it's nice that the band are in a place where everybody's surviving nicely – y'know, we've gotten through our substance abuse era relatively intact and we're doing OK pulling into the '90s, y'know, into the millennium. It's remarkable."

I was recently talking to David Crosby about his book, *Long Time Gone*...

"...Terribly depressing... ha ha ha! Crosby's a good guy, he really is. A bright guy, a funny guy, but he's like all the rest of us – if you get more than you can deal with, what's to stop you from taking it all the way?"

Is the transition from use to abuse inevitable?

"I don't know. I think it may be in some people's lives."

Crosby claims he has an addictive character.

"Yeah, I have one, too. I totally sympathise with him, but I'm glad to see he survived it."

Having been through it yourself, do you at all regret that the band were, and indeed still are, considering a propagation of the drug lifestyle?

"No, not really, because for me, there was a certain positive side about it. I mean, I certainly learned more about *something*... ha ha... than I ever would have if I'd never taken any psychedelics. This is not a black-and-white thing. I can't condemn drugs wholeheartedly. I know a lot of people who take 'em and then stop or take 'em once in a while and it never affects them, y'know. I'm just one of those people who, if I had a chance to, I'll take 'em forever, ha ha ha.

"But it's also one of those things that I feel I've used up in myself. I mean, you can only go so far and then you start to realise, 'I'm not learning anything from this any more.'

"It becomes more of a habit – it's controlling every waking moment. And, when it gets to the point where your friends are spending most of their time worrying about you, then it's really time to do something about it."

The really horrific thing is, it took almost dying to stop you and Crosby doing it.

"That's the other part of this awful thing – you can't tell anybody anything. All you can do is say, 'I'm your friend and I'm worried about you.' You can't say, 'Hey, stop it!' – it doesn't work. You can only hope that the person is going to be able to see it somewhere. And if you're lucky, they do."

Does it make a great deal of difference to the way you play now?

"I don't think it does. It makes a difference to the way I *feel* about the way I play. But, in terms of my actual playing, I don't think it makes a huge difference. I think the most significant chemical change in my playing was the thing of having psychedelic experiences – not that I can say it directly affected my playing in some specific way, but it changed my perception of what playing is in some way.

"I'm not good at analysing this. It's kind of like reading a really great book – you haven't really been there but you now have these pictures from some other life and it enriches you. And for me, the psychedelic experiences were more convincing than this life, do you know what I mean? I've never lost that thing of being convinced that there's much more to whatever consciousness is than what we experience in a day-to-day way.

"And I've been lucky enough to meet people like Kesey who've been able to illuminate some sense that this is not just a drug-induced fantasy, but part of the larger picture of the consciousness which we're all making an effort to map and... well, we're making an effort to evolve in some sense. Y'see, my own personal bent is more cynical and sceptical – I tend to not believe that the voice I hear is the voice of God, ha ha! I tend to think, 'Well, it's probably the drugs', y'know?

"Left to my own devices, I would discount most of it. But my life experience as a member of the Grateful Dead in this high-energy environment and the people that I've met as a result of it and the kind of feedback I've gotten has made me a different person, so that part of drugs and my own personal development has been totally positive. That's why I'll never be one of those guys who says, 'Don't ever take drugs under any circumstances.'

"I think it depends on the individual. If you're called in your life to seek a little farther, to go a little farther in some direction, and that direction leads you to psychedelics and you benefit from it or are enlarged by it in some way, I think that's good.

"I mean, I've never heard of anybody dying from marijuana overdose, and as far as I can tell, alcohol is probably the worst drug out there... d'you know what I mean?"

Do you carry the acid experience as a vivid memory within you?

"It's part of my present consciousness, yeah,

"We're in a place that we never expected to be": the Dead at Cal Expo Amphitheater, Sacramento, CA, August 4, 1989

very definitely, because for me, the whole psychedelic experience had a sequential quality. When I took my first acid, then my second, each time they would take off where they left off and I had this continuous quality until finally it got to a point when I realised, 'This is as much as I'm gonna learn this way' and it stopped working, it stopped happening for me. I started just having mindless, weird bummers."

So you remember your very first trip?

"Oh yeah, I remember every one of them. Every one of them is burned on every DNA molecule in my old being, ha ha ha... Yeah, they've burned in. That experience is not very far from me at any time, every once in a while, I like to revisit, y'know, but I prefer mushrooms and gentler psychedelics, something that's easier to handle.

"The world is too paranoid now. I mean, then you could just get incredibly high, wander out into the world and, at the very worst, they would dismiss you as a loon, y'know, they didn't even know what LSD was. That was the charm and beauty of being right at that moment. That was real luck on our part."

You knew something they didn't...

"Right! So it was a huge giggle, but now it's the encroachment of the Bush era and the sirens and the grrrr, ha ha ha..."

It's bound to turn bad...

"That's right. The big fright. So for me, it's not as much fun – that's why I prefer the mushrooms because they're gentle and you can usually stay on top of it if that's what you need to deal with. We're all changing. We're growing older, obviously, and I think, when you get older, you get a little more cautious in some ways, but you also get more selective."

> **"THE DEAD DOES THAT THING THAT MAKES YOU CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE"**
> MICKEY HART

Despite the fact that the Dead have cleaned up their act, there's further evidence that they will forever call upon their psychedelic past to warp their music and their listeners' minds. For example, percussionist Mickey Hart – who, with drummer Bill Kreutzmann, created and plays a monstrous array of paraphernalia known as The Beast – is currently writing a book called *Drummer At The Edge Of Magic* which examines the primal effect and influences of percussion.

"It's what the Grateful Dead does – it has transformative power," says the wiry Hart, a lean enthusiast, with the karma and demeanour of a cheekier version of David Carradine in *Kung Fu*.

"It does that thing that makes you change your attitude. It's entertaining, it's music, but its business is transformation."

It was in this spirit that, in the mid-'70s, Hart organised what amounted to a drum orchestra, called The Diga Rhythm Band and recorded *Diga*, the only drum-oriented LP I am wholly absorbed by – a project that took three months' solid rehearsal in a barn and, at one stage, four days and nights non-stop playing. It was in this spirit that he formed the Rhythm Devils and recorded the soundtrack for Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* by building a jungle of percussion and playing along to the whole, crawling through the debris of drums to reach his own heart of darkness. ➤

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

And it was in this spirit that *Blues For Allah*, perhaps the most extraordinary of the Dead albums recently re-released in Britain through Ace Records, was created.

"It was during the year we weren't performing," says Garcia. "Every day, the whole band went to Bob's house and we'd just sit around and play. It was us on our own – there was nobody there looking after us... ha ha ha... so we had a chance to do some really crazy things.

"Mickey went out and got this cardboard box full of 500 live crickets and we were sticking microphones in, y'know, recording them. We slowed the tape down and it was incredible. We learned amazing things. Each time you slowed it down, the acoustic space of the cardboard box and the reflections would expand geometrically. Crickets slowed down to half speed sound like seagulls on a beach. Slowed down another half, they sound like horses in a canyon somewhere, and then whales on the ocean floor!

"We wanted to create this picture of the desert – y'know, dryness and brittleness and the wind and so forth. But, at the end of the thing, there were crickets everywhere! They all escaped! So we were in this little studio and I'm mixing and there's crickets crawling on every place you put your hand. Ha ha! It was incredible – totally mad. We just had a crazy time making it."

Bob Weir laughs: "We're always like that. We're constantly gonna be doing things that will make people wonder just exactly what we're up to, why are we going for this and that? Have we lost it? Chances are we will have..."

"THERE were plenty of occasions when he'd start playing a song and I had no idea what he was doing."

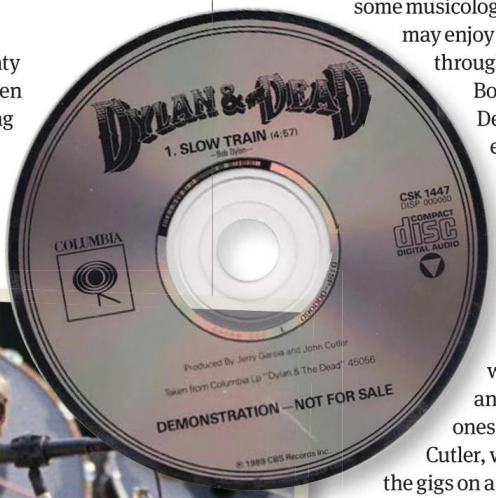
Bob Weir flinches, then smiles, remembering the summer of '87 when the Grateful Dead backed Bob Dylan during a series of concerts which, earlier this year, were captured for posterity on the *Dylan & The Dead* LP, a lively if loose testimony to their mutual love for making the moment happen.

"We've always had the utmost respect, fondness, whatever for Dylan's work. I mean, he is the voice of God in my estimation, whether he likes it or not... I'm not sure where the suggestion that we play together came from but when it came my way, I was real excited at the prospect."

"DYLAN'S A STRANGE PERSON. BUT HE'S ALSO A CHARMING GUY"

MICKEY HART

"It was our idea to record it," says Jerry Garcia. "We thought, 'Who knows if this is ever going to happen again? And, even if neither of us wants to put it out in the event that it's a catastrophe, even if the tapes just sit in the vaults, some musicologist of the future may enjoy himself going through them'."



Both Dylan and the Dead are legendarily erratic performers, so it must have been a marriage made in heaven... or in hell, however the night turned out.

"Yeah, there were good shows and there were bad ones," admits John Cutler, who recorded all the gigs on a mobile studio and helped Garcia produce the album. "To my ears, Dylan's sense of time is rather strange. Y'know, 'Knocking On Heaven's Door' on the record? He's really singing the verses in the places where he normally doesn't sing. I'm sure there was no plan on his mind and certainly no plan in the band's mind for that to happen, it just happened and we found it interesting."

"We're used to playing it pretty loose, so his style fits ours pretty well," says Weir. "He might play a song that we'd rehearsed but in a completely different way. Still, after a few bars, somebody would figure it out and put in some sort of signature riff from the way we'd been playing it before, adapted to this new way, and we'd be off.

"I really like that way of doing it because you're not gonna take anything for granted. Every note counts when you're playing like that. Every second is a little achievement."

Cutler maintains it was Dylan's idea to release an album as a souvenir of the shows, essentially because they had performed "Slow Train", "Gotta Serve Somebody" and "Joey", songs he had never released live before. But, as Garcia and Cutler began listening back over the six performances, they also discovered sterling versions of "All Along The Watchtower" and "Knocking On Heaven's Door", songs which Dylan had already put out as live versions, albeit in drastically different forms. So the album ended up a mixture of both old and, as it were, new.

"Bob's famous as a sort of interventionist," laughs Garcia. "Y'know, I've heard some of his records have been mixed 90 times or something, so I thought, 'Oh God, is that the way it's gonna be or what?' But actually it was very good and we conferred with him over every step – tune selections, which performances and so forth, and he was very giving. The whole thing worked out pretty well.

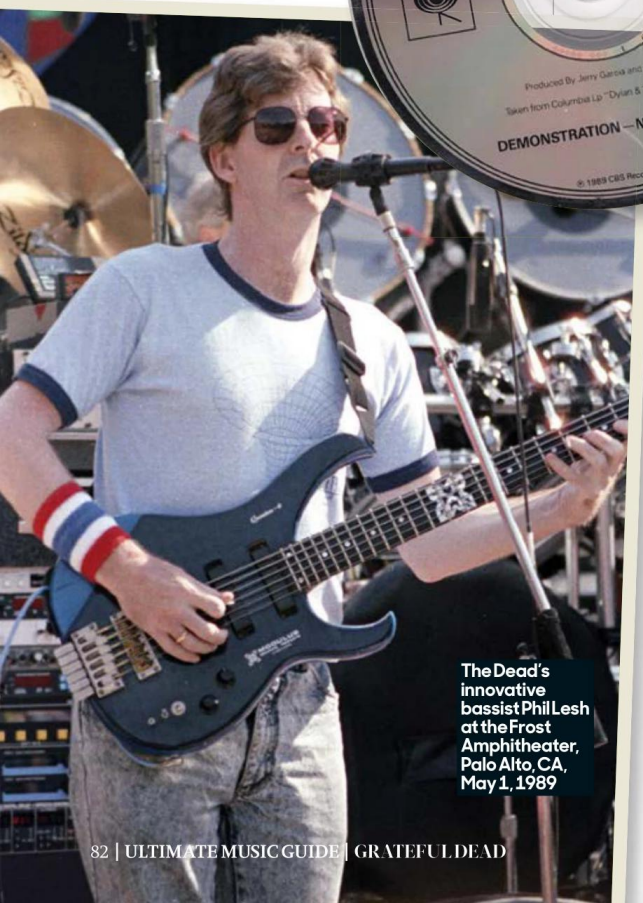
"We had this funny experience when we were working on it. We went over to his house in Malibu which is... I don't know where the hell it is... y'know, it's out in the country somewhere... And he has these huge dogs which are like mastiffs, about seven of 'em. And so we drive up and these dogs surround the car and Dylan's kinda rattling around in the house, this rambling structure, and he takes us into this room that's kinda baronial – y'know, big fireplace and wooden panelling and steep roof. And there's this big table and about four or five chairs around it – no other furniture. And on the table is about a $39 ghetto blaster about... yea big, y'know? And he's got the cassette and he sticks it in there and he says, 'Don't you think the voice is mixed a little loud in that one?'

"So we just sat and listened to it on this little funky thing and he'd say, 'I think there ought to be a little more bass,' and I'd take notes and it was just a matter of changing the mixes. Just a matter... ha... For me, mixing is like taking a picture. When this music is in focus, that's the way it's in focus – it's almost finite. So, when somebody tells me to mix something *wrong*, I'm in trouble.

"So I told him. I said. 'Listen, if you don't hear the vocal, you can't make out the lyrics...' and so on. And we went back and forth like that a couple of times and his input was... well, that was the weirdest part. There was a couple of places there where it was like, 'Woah! I don't know what's happening right now. I don't know what I'm doing any more!'"

Dylan gets a lot of criticism for reinterpreting his songs vocally. Some people have even suggested he's throwing them away as a comment on the people who treat him as an idol and consider his every word gospel.

"That's not true," says Garcia. "That's not the kind of guy he is. He's a really strange person. I mean, I can't pretend to know him even a little, but I feel friendly toward him and I feel he's probably as open with us as he is with anybody. He's real tough to pin down. But it's funny, he's also a really charming guy."



TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

The Dead's innovative bassist Phil Lesh at the Frost Amphitheater, Palo Alto, CA, May 1, 1989

"There are kids who play 10 times as good as I do": Jerry Garcia at Laguna Seca Raceway, CA, August 1, 1988

Reactions to the album were as varied as expected – both Dylan and the Dead have always tended to polarise public opinion on account of their uncompromising attitudes to their art. Neither has ever made a record with commerciality in mind. Neither has ever been anything but maverick.

Garcia reckons the album boasts a few gems, Weir considers it a little loose, no-one seems to know Dylan's opinion and Mickey Hart calls it an aberration. "We were trying to back up a singer on songs that no-one knew," he says bluntly. "It was not our finest hour, nor his. I don't know why it was even made into a record."

This is typical of the candid combination that has kept the Grateful Dead vital while many of their contemporaries have become embarrassing MOR rockers or time-warped hippies.

"I don't think we've ever made a really good studio record, either," continues Hart. "We never really pay that much attention to it in a way, because we're a live band and we pride ourselves on live performance."

There's a school of thought that the recording process is actually the complete antithesis of the Grateful Dead ethos. While getting it down in the studio establishes a definitive version and can effectively kill a song, the Dead have always thrived on putting their songs through complex, instinctive transformations which serve to keep them alive over many years.

"We can't control that," says Garcia. "It's just that we're constitutionally unable to play exactly the same thing night after night. It won't happen! There's no way – it's just the way we are as players. We tend to find parts but only to have something to deviate from.

"I can't remember a time when I was able to tell what somebody else was going to play during a tune, I've given it up years ago really. Even now Weir plays some part or some *thing* in a tune that I've never heard before and I've no idea what he's getting at. But then, you learn to trust each other.

"Mostly recording, for us, is like pulling teeth. We've never been able to find a way to make it fun. For me, the hard part is being a producer and a performer; finding that objective ear used to drive me crazy especially the way the Grateful Dead works. We'd always be at take 900 and I'd be listening to it and I'd think, 'Well, if I splice take 743 into the first two verses...' I hate to do things that way now, so working on our new record, we've developed this approach which is actually a bit mechanistic but coughs up better results.

"We start off with a take of the tune and assume, 'This is the tune, this is what we're working on. This is its length. This is its structure,' and we just work on it and it still gives us enough of the interaction that we play with on stage. And, if this record turns out good – which, of course, there's no way of knowing – then maybe we'll be able to make more records and they'll be better than they have been. But, of course, if it doesn't work, we're back to square one, stabbing around in the dark again."

MICKEY HART is sitting in his home studio, busily burying more of the Dead's past – specifically the early Arista years when their own label had folded and they allowed themselves to be manhandled in the studio by the likes of Gary Lyons ("a plumber"), Keith Olsen (who ruined *Terrapin Station* – "He's lucky he's small!") and poor old Lowell George, who didn't even produce his own Little Feat – when he's interrupted by Dead biographer and all-round good egg, Dennis McNally. ➤

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

"Sorry to butt in, but you've got a wonderful phone call going on your machine. Your cousin or whoever it was that was pregnant, she came through, she had the baby and everybody was listening to your tape."

Hart excuses himself and rushes to the phone. When he returns, he's gushing: "This is great! This guy is Walter Kronkite's producer, Tom Donaldson. I did some work with him on the America's Cup programme – he's a good friend – and they used the music I composed for my son Taro's birth. I recorded his heartbeat before he was born, in Mary's womb, and brought it back to the 16-track and overdubbed it.

"It's called 'Music To Be Born By'. I've been giving out tapes of it for years and I usually get a recollection of how it went down and a picture of the baby. One lady had twins and she was in labour for 18 hours and she listened to the music all that time... It just repeats every four bars so you can breathe – it's constant and relaxing. It's released on Ryko in a couple of weeks."

The Grateful Dead has always been enriched by its members' extracurricular activities. Garcia has released several solo ventures, including *Almost Acoustic*, a country thang he recently put together with some old buddies, and he says he plans to record his electric band real soon. Weir was in Kingfish for a while and is currently messing with a pal who plays upright bass. And then there's film. The Grateful Dead have already made their own concert movies, but now it seems some Hollywood types are interested in this abiding phenomenon.

"Y'KNOW, THE GRATEFUL DEAD REALLY IS SANTA CLAUS IN MANY WAYS"
MICKEY HART

"We know what we'd like the film to be, but it's way too weird for them," says Garcia. "They're settling on stuff like, 'Well, there's this couple who have a Deadhead son or daughter that...' You know what I mean? One of those kinda real straight stories where we're sorta furniture.

"Some movie like that will undoubtedly get somewhere, but in the meantime it's got us thinking about another Grateful Dead movie and, if we do one, it's gonna be *Citizen Kane* or nothing. It'll be weird enough for Deadheads and weird enough for us to be able to watch when it happens. But the movie world is worse than the music business. They lie to you all the time. They just tell you what you wanna hear, so it's impossible to take any of it seriously.

"Still, somebody really wants this film to happen, which is kind of embarrassing because I've been trying to sell a screenplay for years and I can't get anywhere with the damn thing. I bought the film rights to *The Sirens Of Titan*, Kurt Vonnegut's book, and me and a friend, Tom Beevis, wrote a wonderful screenplay. I'd love to direct it because it's one of my favourite books of all time and it would make such a good movie.

"I'm in no rush, though; I don't want somebody to make a bad movie of it, that's the thing. I have a protective relationship to it, so maybe one day I'll find some Saudi Arabian... heh heh heh... who has $30 million to throw away and I'll put out a hell of a movie!"

Meanwhile, Hart has his deal with Ryko, a label that willingly releases his World Series – a collection of recordings from around the world, including the music of upper and lower Egypt which he took time out to record after the Dead's infamous shows that took place at the foot of the Great Pyramid in Cairo to coincide with a total eclipse of the moon in 1978.

"HE WAS AT EASE WITH HIS LEGEND..."

STEVE SUTHERLAND RECALLS THE TIME HE SPENT WITH JERRY GARCIA FOR HIS MELODY MAKER FEATURE...

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

As we pulled up outside the Fillmore West, he was waiting for us on the steps. Grinning, he took my arm and, walking into the hallowed venue, stopped in the foyer and chuckled. "Jeez, I've lost some brain cells in this place!"

As perfect moments go, they don't come any better.

This was typical Garcia. It seemed to me he was always chuckling, a wheezy, hearty chortle wreathed in perpetual cigarette smoke, totally at ease with his considerable legend but still somewhat bemused by the absurdity of it all.

He played guitar. Big deal. That was his philosophy. But if others chose to elect him some sort of generational leader, he wasn't about to turn his back on the responsibilities and opportunities that came with the territory. Nor, for that matter, the trappings of wealth that accompanied the fame.

Certainly (apart from David Bowie and Richard Butler of The Psychedelic Furs) he was the only rock star I ever met who was genuinely interested in what I had to say.

You "interview" most people. You had a "conversation" with Jerry. And I got the feeling on this particular occasion that the Dead were in the unfamiliar position of searching for allies. The authorities were on their case and the UK press somewhat baffled them.

Garcia came back to one incident again and again. Paul Morley had interviewed him for *NME* when he'd been in London a while ago and not only had he made Garcia out as some kind of hippie imbecile but he'd coaxed him into having his photo taken in the bath in his hotel room (see p103), which only served to enhance the impression. Garcia was genuinely puzzled by this, couldn't understand why anyone would want to stitch someone up the way he felt he'd been done.

What, he asked with sincere concern, was the guy's problem? Did I know him? Was he OK? Was he unhappy or something?

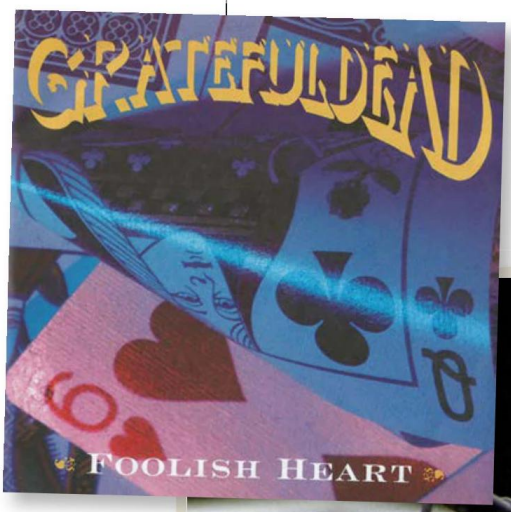
I stayed out at San Raphael, with the Dead, for a week all told, unchaperoned; the kind of access that no-one gets in these days when publicists do exactly the opposite of what their title suggests and are hired to shield their clients from the likes of me. Despite the UK bruising, I was made to feel I was on their bus, so I was lucky enough to get to know, just a little, one of those rarest of breeds: a good man who (he'd chortle at this!) sought in his own humble way to make this world a far better place.

Garcia: a good man puzzled by others' unkindness

He's on the board of directors of The Smithsonian Institute, too, in charge of transferring the rich but rotting collection of recorded folk music from the analogue onto digital. The first public release of this work was "A Vision Shared", performances by Lead Belly and Woody Guthrie which were processed through a computer for a cleaner, durable sound. Miraculously, he also finds time to do soundtracks.

"Apart from *Apocalypse Now*, I did 79 episodes of *The Twilight Zone* as sound designer and musical director. Then I did a 13-part Vietnam series. And just now it's *Greed, Guns and Wildlife*, a National Autobond special on poaching on PBS.

"Y'know, they're wiping out our wildlife. These poachers, professionals are coming into the Smokies and taking mountain lions, bald eagles, it goes on and on – they're just raping our wildlife. Thirty dollars here makes 'em 4,000 in South East Asia, man. I had no idea until I saw this thing and I said, 'Wow! This is real! They're just kicking our ass!' There won't be any more animals for kids to see. They're just wiping them out – bears are gonna be all wiped out, cougars, eagles... I understood there was poaching but I didn't understand it was on a big, professional scale, a huge... I mean, networking. Now it's being exposed. In fact, it's in the paper today, the very thing, about the poachers."



PHILANTHROPIC as ever, the Grateful Dead have lately been involved in some heavy causes. On May 27, they play a concert in Oakland Stadium with Huey Lewis, Tracy Chapman and Los Lobos to help raise money for Aids awareness, and they're also becoming increasingly influential in the Rain Forest Project. Following a benefit they played at New York's Madison Square Garden last September for The Rain Forest Action Network, Greenpeace and Cultural Survival, they have been inundated with enquires about how other people can help.

"I don't know why it always ends up being us," laughs Garcia. "I mean, of all the incompetent fuck-ups that have to end up dealing with this serious problem, why it falls into our hands I'll never fucking understand. We can barely get on stage and play, so doing this other stuff is amazing to me! But, as long as it keeps falling our way, I guess we have to deal with it. We have no choice, really."

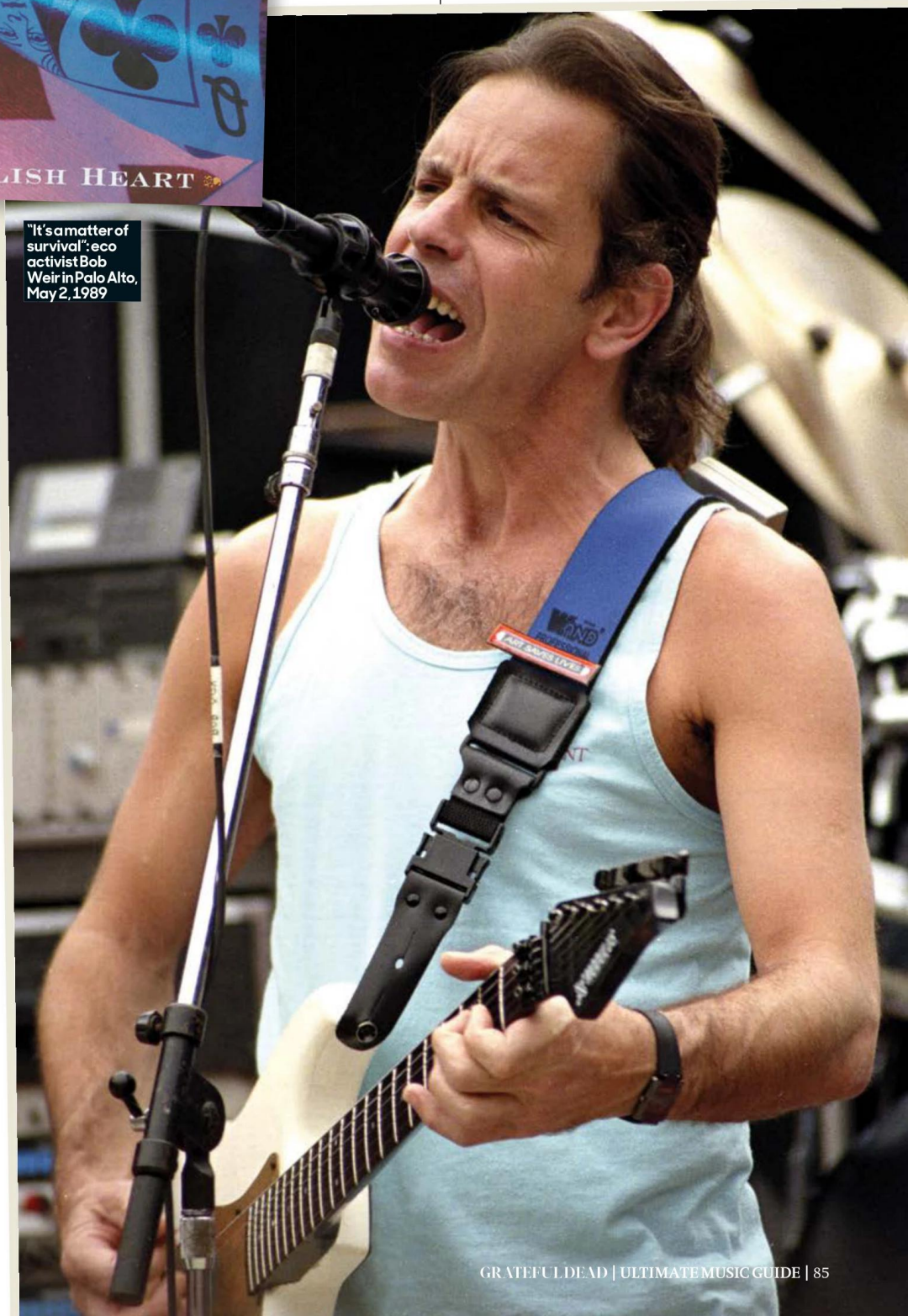
"The rainforest issue is cut and dried," says Weir. "If we don't halt the destruction of the rainforests, that problem is going to swallow life as we know it on Earth. It won't be possible for us to live here. It's a matter of survival and something's gotta be done about it because the direct circumstances will inevitably come within our lifetimes unless we halt the current trends. This particular disease is already advanced to the point where it's taking its toll on our daily lives and it will, in the end, put an end to us if we don't face it squarely."

There is already a drought in California as a consequence of the Earth's atmosphere being altered by the raping of the rainforests and the reduction of their vital role as processors of oxygen and, as the Earth inevitably warms and dries up, the Dead, among many, are determined to raise as much money as possible to lobby the government and purchase the land rights for the forest Indians.

But it's rare for the Dead to air their views so publicly. Normally they go about their charitable business more quietly, dispensing funds via their Rex Foundation, a board comprising the band and many of their close friends and associates. Money from the Grateful Dead regularly finds its way to the local needy – to, according to Hart, "the old folks, the childcare thing, the salmon fishing... Y'know, the Indian rights or soup kitchens in Petaluma or music in the schools or whatever.

"Y'know, the Grateful Dead really is Santa Claus in many ways. It's really a good thing – it gives a lot and it doesn't take."

I think of Garcia in a red hooded cloak and, yeah, I can almost hear reindeer.



"It's a matter of survival": eco activist Bob Weir in Palo Alto, May 2, 1989

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

GRATEFUL DEAD

BUILT TO LAST

RELEASED OCTOBER 31, 1989

On a commercial high, the Dead embrace the digital world. But despite politicised epics and comforting optimism, their 13th studio album was built to be their last. BY NICK HASTED

THE Dead had penetrated the heart of the MTV generation with 1987's "Touch Of Grey", which acknowledged their grizzled endurance with grim wit and bright melody, crossing over in an unusually profound way. But this last-gasp chart breakout was a shock they struggled to shake off.

"It's horrible," Bob Weir moaned of belated fame, and the suddenly vast Deadhead hordes. "If we're not in the mainstream," Jerry Garcia conceded to TV interviewer Mark McEwen, "we're pretty close to it." Yet any thought that the Dead would idealistically pull back from the music industry machine misunderstood how Garcia saw himself now. Prematurely aged by his addictions when "Touch Of Grey" pushed him into the spotlight, *Built To Last*'s videos found him with the coiffed white locks of an iconic rock star, not a shuffling hippie. Like Weir, he was only in early middle age, and still meant to compete in the rock marketplace.

The Dead had planned to repeat *In The Dark*'s formula, dabbling for 18 months with live sessions at the Marin County Civic Center and George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch. But their new songs demanded a different approach. Serious recording began in April 1989, and adopted '80s studio practices, as Garcia explained to *Rolling Stone*: "We worked from rhythm tracks... which we'd write into a computer." Weir and Hart mostly used their own studios, "everybody at their own rate". This was arm's-length collaboration, "interacting with the music more directly and not so much with each other". Communal magic was mostly passé.

CRITICS' VERDICT

"While their contemporaries have fallen to death, destitution or, worse, the living death of self-parody, the Dead are neither bitter nor twisted out of shape after nearly a quarter of a century making maverick music... 'Victim Or The Crime' [is] the Dead's finest achievement in 15 years... Harking back to the gorgeously tangled Bedouin excursions of 'Blues For Allah' and even beyond to the farthest-out ever harmonic freeform of 'Dark Star', it shows the Dead have never lost touch with the essence of their greatness."

STEVE SUTHERLAND, MELODY MAKER, OCTOBER 14, 1989

Garcia proudly informed McEwen this was "our first record where it's truly a studio record... constructed from the songs out", lavishing praise on its diligent sheen. "This will hold up compared to anything else in the world of professional recording." 1989 saw many of the Dead's peers make comebacks on their own terms, Dylan's *Oh Mercy*, Lou Reed's *New York* and Neil Young's *Freedom* all throwing off the yoke of the just ending, antipathetic decade. The Dead instead accommodated it.

Built To Last opened with "Foolish Heart", and Garcia's yearning performance of Robert Hunter's approximation of optimism: "*Never look around the bend/Or check the weather charts.*" There were just two other Garcia/Hunter songs. The title track's nagging melody lifted a more troubled consideration of endurance, Garcia advising, "*You can take a lot of reckoning/But you can't take it all.*" His Midi guitar's brass solo serenaded another bittersweet Hunter equivalent to the Grateful Dead's ambiguous name. Only he seemed to understand the sickly horror at the edges of the band's vision, and the despairing "*darkness*" he saw beneath Garcia's cheery front. That year, the singer refused to distance himself from right-wingers in their new crowds, blithely saying, "We're American too. What we do is as American as lynch mobs."

"Standing On the Moon" proved to be the pair's valedictory epic, in which a fully engaged Garcia sang freighted with a lifetime's dismay, loss and love, biting down on bitter words. "*I got no cobweb on my shoe*," he noted, as Captain Trips surreally found himself next to Neil Armstrong's stiff, abandoned Stars and Stripes,

TRACKMARKS

1. Foolish Heart ★★★
2. Just A Little Light ★★★
3. Built To Last ★★★
4. Blow Away ★★★
5. Victim Or The Crime ★★★
6. We Can Run ★★★
7. Standing On The Moon ★★★★
8. Picasso Moon ★★★
9. I Will Take You Home ★★★★

Label: Arista
Producer: Jerry Garcia and John Cutler
Recorded: Club Front, San Rafael, California
Personnel: Jerry Garcia (vocals, guitar), Mickey Hart (drums, percussion), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Phil Lesh (bass), Brent Mydland (keyboards, vocals), Bob Weir (guitar, vocals)
Highest chart position: UK –; US 27

looking down on American carnage in Vietnam and El Salvador, and wishing only to be "*in San Francisco on a back porch in July... with you*."

Bob Weir's most notable song, "Victim Or The Crime", used lyrics by regular Brian De Palma actor Gerrit Graham (having worked on *Apocalypse Now*'s soundtrack, Weir moved in movie brat circles). Abrasive synth effects, metallic, proggy solos and Mickey Hart effects accompanied an angsty lyric that could have been addressed to Garcia: "*Patience runs out on the junkie.../Whatever happened to his precious self-control?*"

But it was Brent Mydland who dominated, and really dragged the Dead into the late '80s (if not exactly its cutting edge). John Barlow was his lyricist, giving embattled grace to the cold man undone by love in "Just a Little Light". "Blow Away" was all serrated guitar slashes and pretty harmonies in another wrestle between defensive cynicism and taking a chance. With his grizzled voice and blowsy, addictive chorus, Mydland made this a different band; Bob Seger's, perhaps.

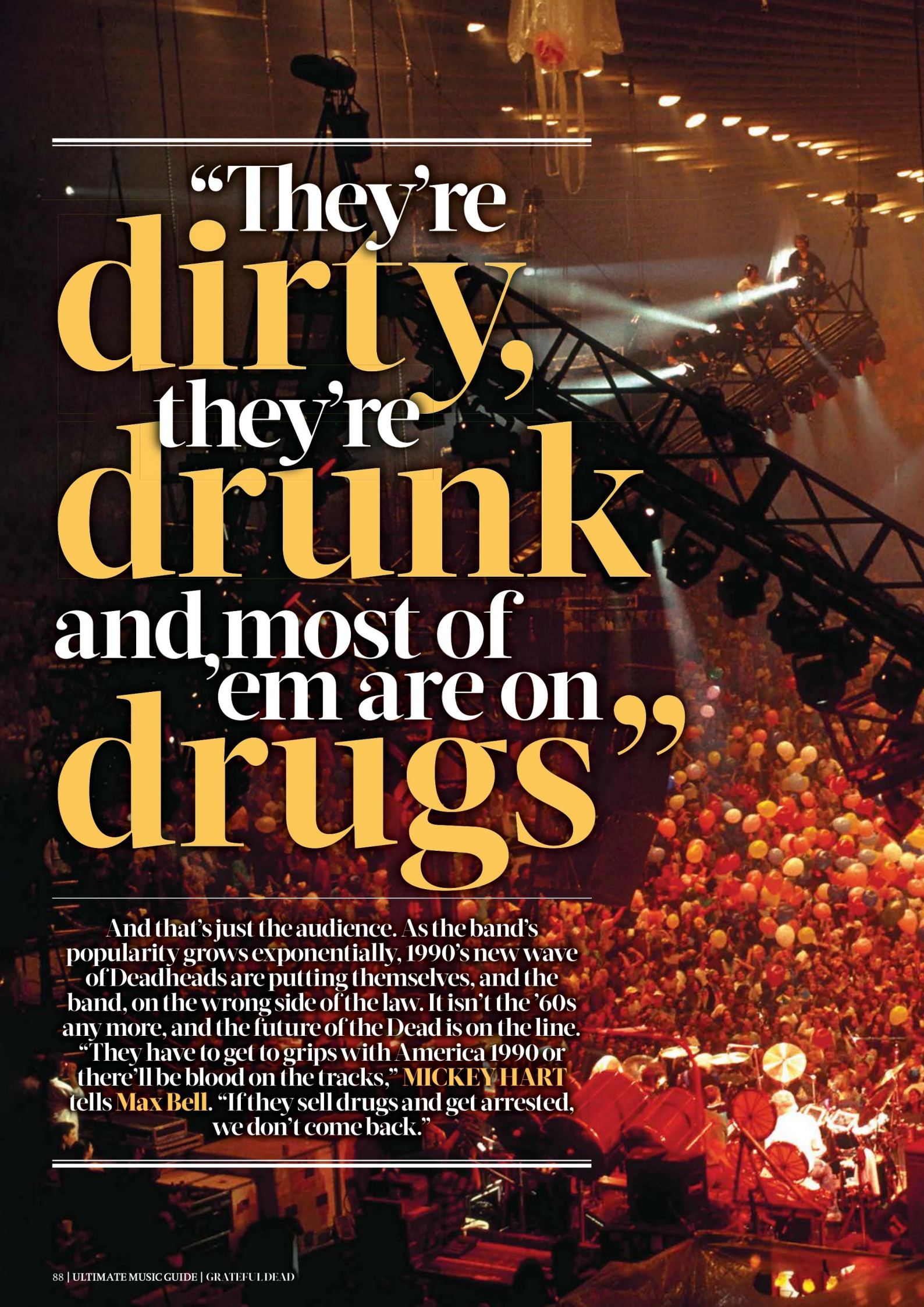
"We Can Run" was an eco-lament twin to Weir's "Throwing Stones", letting Garcia's guitar out to dance through its ambling country rock. Mydland's soulful vocal wasn't so far from Levon Helm (he sang "The Weight" on stage). Best of all was *Built To Last*'s closing ballad, "I Will Take You Home". Winding up a chiming music box at its start, it was an aching lullaby, which in the course of lyrics written for Mydland to sing to his two- and five-year-old daughters, declared: "*I wish I knew where we were bound.../Your Daddy's gonna be right here beside you.../I will take you home.*" The Dead's last studio album closed with their most open heart.

THE DEAD'S LAST STUDIO LP CLOSED WITH THEIR MOST OPEN HEART

The band's decline then played out remorselessly beyond *Built To Last*'s grooves. The intended comfort of "I Will Take You There" became a weeping wound on 26 July, 1990, when Mydland fatally overdosed at home from a coke/morphine "speedball". Disparaged as a Michael McDonald clone on *In The Dark*, his jumpy presence and full-bore vocals live were more like Joe Cocker, and no straighter than Weir's. With his energetic mastery as he skipped between keyboards and studio enthusiasm, the "new guy" had revived the Dead.

With the bushy beard of a hippie veteran and bruises of exhaustion beneath his eyes, the band's thirtysomething kid also betrayed kinship with Garcia's worst qualities. His loss let the darkness in. His replacement, Vince Welnick, slit his own throat in 2006. The Dead and their leader were already long gone. Declaring Mydland's loss as "crushing", Garcia had become a bloated, wheezing husk, making his 1995 death a matter of time.

Built To Last's title therefore gained retrospective echoes of the mendacious optimism of later Sly Stone records such as *Fresh*. But when they made it, having climbed the commercial mountain on terms they would have recognised back in Haight-Ashbury, the road still seemed endless. Only the gap between the utopian and hedonistic dreams, and the band's mounting casualties in their shadow, undermined *Built To Last*'s bullish promise. ●



"They're dirty, they're drunk and most of 'em are on drugs"

And that's just the audience. As the band's popularity grows exponentially, 1990's new wave of Deadheads are putting themselves, and the band, on the wrong side of the law. It isn't the '60s any more, and the future of the Dead is on the line. "They have to get to grips with America 1990 or there'll be blood on the tracks," **MICKEY HART** tells **Max Bell**. "If they sell drugs and get arrested, we don't come back."

Midnight balloons: the Dead live on New Year's Eve 1989, Coliseum Arena, Oakland, CA

PHILIP GOULD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

VOX NOVEMBER 1990

THE GRATEFUL Dead's joker gargoyle mascot smiles impassively from its perch, high atop the band's day-glo stage set, designed by Candace Brightman. Down below, the yellow-shirted security men who are trying to keep the growing mass of Deadheads in the Three Rivers Stadium, Pittsburgh in some sort of order are getting mighty edgy. The temperature has reached 95 degrees and the atmosphere is distinctly loose. "These people are on some serious drugs – they are definitely illegal," mutters one hired hand to nobody in particular as he sidesteps a bunch of tie-dyed crazies spraying passers-by with a refreshing hose. "Spraying" fellow audience members with LSD-spiked water is a relatively new phenomenon at Dead concerts this summer.

As the vintage hippie band celebrate their 25th anniversary, entering the fourth decade on the golden road to unlimited devotion, the relationship between the Dead and their massive band of young followers shows distinct signs of strain. Three fans have died drug-related deaths inside or outside Dead concerts in the past year and the arrests total has started to go off the scale. Patrick Shanahan, 19, was allegedly choked to death by a police officer outside the Los Angeles Forum, though the police insist they were merely trying to subdue the fan. No charges have yet been filed. Another teenager, Adam Katz, also died after being found unconscious outside the Brendan Byrne Arena, New Jersey, late last year. Allegedly Katz had taken LSD and was beaten up by security guards.

Human tragedies aside, the Grateful Dead are suffering the backlash against exuberant fans. Old strongholds like the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University insist the crowds are too hard to handle and won't invite the band back. Back at Three Rivers, a security man warms to his theme with venomous glee.

BOB MINKIN/MEDIAPUNCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Dead's mascot, Autzen Stadium, Eugene, Oregon, June 24, 1990

"These arseholes, they fight, they urinate on people's lawns, they camp on the median strip. They're dirty, they're drunk and most of 'em are on drugs."

Yeah, but apart from that?

Local press reports inflame respectable neighbourhoods with gory pulp headlines. "Dawn of the Deadheads at Carter Finley" blares one in Raleigh Durham, North Carolina. Two days after the band's Pittsburgh concert went off with nary a hitch came the headline, "Lawmen prepare to face the Dead".

Outside Carter Finley, the Deadheads aim straight for the Park It and Market area known as the Dead Mall, a fragrant al fresco area of VW vans where unlicensed vendors sell everything from tofu sandwiches and cream cheese bagels to hand made tie-dyes, Guatemalan vests and things you pop in your mouth which turn the world orange for eight hours.

A squad of 23 undercover agents working the Mall and parking lot are looking for blotter busts. "Given the crowd we have here today, I believe you could make some buys, Major," one of the agents jokes with his superior officer, Major DT Bellamy, a 55-year-old with grey hair and white boat shoes.

The rest of the agents are equally easy to spot. "I feel so stupid," says Shelly, who has borrowed a tie-dye from her fiancé's daughter in a vain attempt to blend in. "We try to look like them but they know we're not like them. I'd have to wear no bra and no underwear. They've got their own language. I don't even know who's in the band."

Here comes Sergeant Hubert Holder, a North Carolina State Trooper, fingering his riot stick and flipping his pistol. Hube homes in on a group of fans who curtail their business as his red baseball cap looms up. "You didn't need to bring your gun, man," a passing Deadhead sneers. "We're peaceful."

Other officers sheepishly tell of fans approaching them to say good afternoon. "I'm just doing my job," says one. "There ain't no action here anyways."

By showtime the mood of frustration in the undercover agents tent has lifted slightly. A handful of kids are hauled in for petty offences like smoking pot or public drinking, while a few blotters have been confiscated. Even Shelly had made her buy. "Yeah, we sat on a car and asked a coupla teenagers – do you have any doses? They had two left. Some of our uniformed officers spotted the transaction and as we passed over the six bucks they busted 'em."

Shelly's companion Dave didn't seem proud of his achievement. "We went for two greenhorns who hadn't been round the block. But it's a start." Like shooting fish in a barrel? "Exactly."

These are not isolated incidents. Everywhere the Dead go the Deadheads surely follow. They are a committed crowd unlike any other and ensure that for every year Jerry Garcia and the boys keep on rolling, they reach an audience of a million plus. Bob Weir isn't exaggerating when he says, "For what it's worth we've played more shows to more people than anyone else ever." Even with a generously priced $17 ticket, the Dead are major money earners on the US circuit, right up there with the Stones.

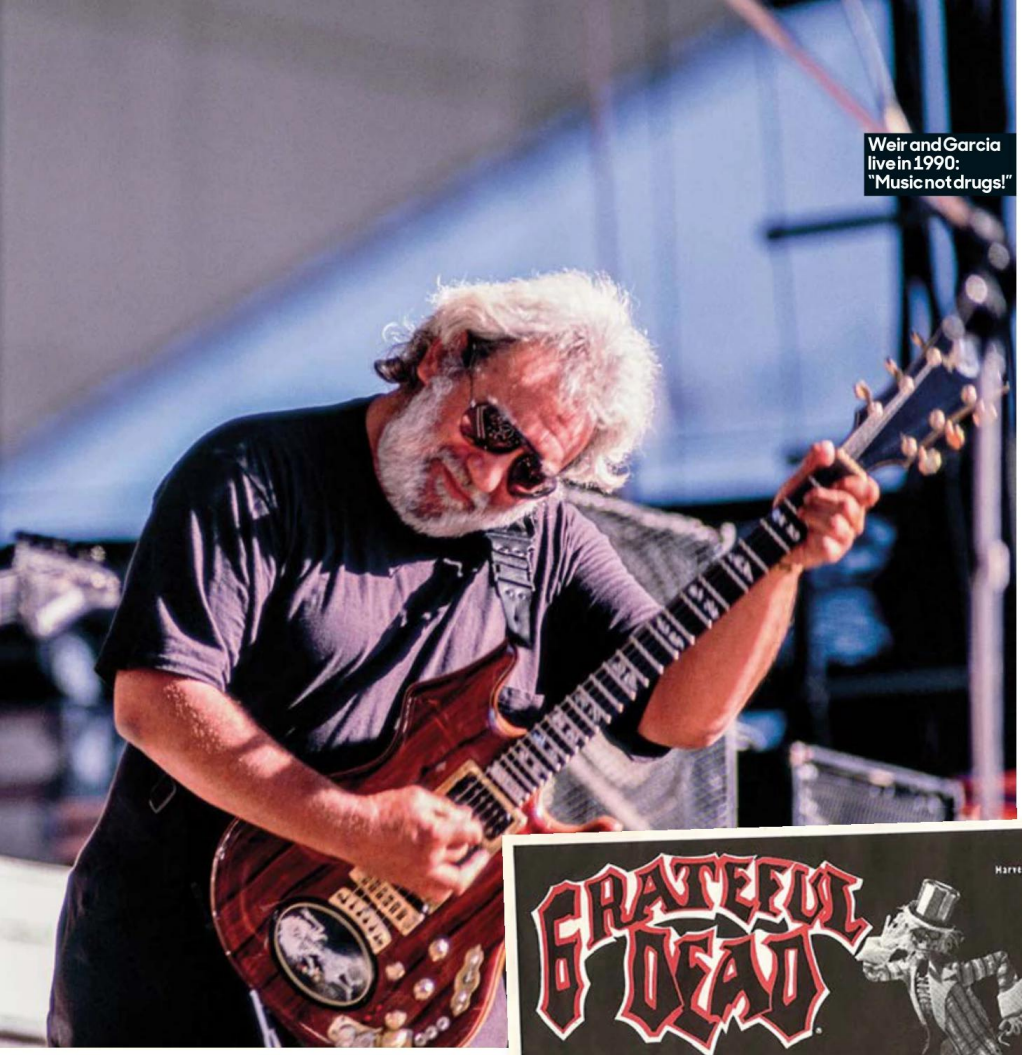
Given the vast numbers they attract it's inevitable that a minority will misbehave, but the

fans I spoke to did socially acceptable things like clear trash after the concerts and organise lifts for fellow freaks.

"The fans are more mellow than after the *In The Dark* tour in 1988," says James Radnor from Norfolk, Virginia. "I went to Pittsburgh last April when they had the big fight over buying tickets. This time they were more copasetic."

And organised. The Deadheads have their own hotline 0900 numbers and computerised databases like The Well, and run head stores from New York to Florida with names like the Zen Tricksters. The more enterprising form charter companies like Ace Air – "We're going to Europe to see the Dead. Are you?" – and advertise holidays for hippies at the Arrowhead Ranch. "800 Acres of amazin' trails, 50-room hotel, 60 horses, great bar." Like the skull-and-roses bumper sticker says: "We are everywhere."

The '90s Deadheads are a far cry from their '60s ancestors. Most of them are high-school kids or college students, though there is a fair sprinkling of blissed-out parents with babies in buggies. The older Dead crowd are affluent. Take Louis, for example, a 40-year-old San Franciscan attorney at law who makes "an uncomfortable living for six months", then spends his vacation following the Dead. "You can't categorise the fans, but there is a neat subculture. Everyone under 50 can spot a Deadhead a mile off. There are people like me who drive BMWs, there are the guys who sit behind the mixing desk and tape every concert" – a practice the band tacitly approves of. "Over there is what we call the Little Girls' Dance Area." Louis points to a stretch of tarpaulin populated by sweat-soaked nubiles thrashing their bodies toward the seventh ring of nirvana. "Look sweet huh? Too bad they don't bathe more often."



Weir and Garcia live in 1990: "Music not drugs!"

"Another picky Deadhead" reads the legend across a fan's chest as he hurtles into an eyeball-scalding sea of tie-dyes. Another sect calling themselves Grateful Deadicates sport clean white shirts with their logo neatly embossed on their polo shirts. The Deadicates stay in the same hotels as the band. Matt and Mike, 17, who made the trek from Cincinnati, Ohio, explain their fascination in sober terms. "We're here for the music because the Dead are awesome. Younger bands like REM suck. This is like a vacation. We jack a few beers, smoke a little; this is a small hobby we like to pursue. Sometimes we camp out or sleep in the car; usually we crash in a hotel room on special rate, four sharing. The atmosphere is good. A few old-timers look like they burnt out in the '60s and got nothing else going down, but mostly the audience is like us, people who missed out first time and want to catch up. Things have been getting crazier since 'Touch Of Grey' went Top 10 but the shows are real loose. We saw Clapton in Ohio and everyone was sitting down. Man, at a Dead show nobody sits down. Everybody's dancing."

If all the fans were as rational as the Deadicates, everyone would be delighted. Tour manager Cameron Sears, to whom falls the unenviable task of smoothing the path ahead, emphasises that Jerry Garcia and company are "definitely not control freaks. They don't acknowledge idolatry and they've never had bodyguards. Normally we don't see the fans as being a problem; it's always been more than just a show for them. I'd describe the Dead as a bar band who went out of control."

It is the Dead's spirit of free expression that angers American authorities and threatens the band's viability as a live unit. Even the band members aren't sure what to do. Jerry Garcia agrees that "our audience is well known for including people who take drugs", but Bob Weir takes an emphatic line. "Our shows are about music, not about drug taking."

Garcia sighs. "The busts haven't cramped our style yet, but it's annoying to find your audience being victimised when you know that at any sporting event there is way more drunkenness and rowdy behaviour. It's axiomatic that you can wrap up a few busts at one of our shows and we have to pay a bond ($50,000) everywhere now. Somebody somewhere finds our audience deeply offensive and they're using drugs as an emotive issue, a cheap shot for smalltime politicians who want easy support. It's exactly like Prohibition in the '30s."

> "THE DEAD ARE AWESOME. YOUNGER BANDS LIKE REM SUCK"
> MATT & MIKE, OHIO

Garcia, who was once known as Captain Trips and conquered heroin addiction four years ago, refuses to adopt the Just Say No line. "I don't understand the moral high ground. That Just Say No shit doesn't mean anything when you're dealing with organised crime."

By hideous coincidence, two weeks after the Dead's summer caravanserai took a July break, keyboards player Brent Mydland was found dead in his Californian home. The autopsy revealed Mydland died from ingesting a lethal speedball, a heroin-cocaine combo. He is the third Dead keyboards player to perish. Ron "Pigpen" McKernan died of liver failure in 1973, while Keith Godchaux was killed in a car crash shortly after quitting the band in 1979. Mydland's epitaph will be the last Dead album, ironically titled *Built To Last*, and dominated by his songs, rather than the forthcoming double live set, *Without A Net*.

The Dead are characteristically diffident about the new record, although wiry percussionist Mickey Hart says it reflects the new era of the Mega Dead. "We suddenly found our box office going through the roof and it wasn't exactly puny before. The new success brought a crush of people and a lot of dealers exploiting our market. The kids have to be disciplined. This isn't the '60s. They have to get to grips with America 1990 or there'll be blood on the tracks. If they sell drugs and get arrested, we don't come back. Our fate is in their hands."

Bob Weir, the Dead's most ostentatiously clean-living jock, says, "By and large I love our audience, with the exception of the idiots who peddle dope and make us most unwelcome. I wish they'd stop before there's nowhere left for us to play."

The Grateful Dead have reached a watershed in a career that began in those hazy crazy days aboard Ken Kesey's bus when they were practically the house band for the Merry Pranksters. Compare that era with the tone of a recent Dead flier: "A Grateful Dead concert is for music not for drug-dealing. Dealing makes us a target. So please don't buy or sell drugs at any of our shows. We're not the police, but if you care about this scene, you'll end this type of behaviour so the authorities will have no reason to shut us down. We're in this together – so thanks."

For Garcia, "the issue is responsibility. The fans are at least half of what's going on. I believe you can't get into too much trouble listening to music. Most of the kids have a good sense of humour, they don't take us too seriously. We get letters from folks who are plain crazy and harbour serious delusions, but how many do they add up to? If you play for 100,000 people, at least 10 are bound to be certifiable, just as some will have broken legs or wear glasses. And some," Garcia chuckled, "some will experience a borderline psychedelic experience without using anything illegal at all. I know I have. Heh heh."

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES

GRATEFUL DEAD

OTHER LIVE ALBUMS

RELEASED 1973-1990

A cornucopia awaits. The Dead's face-stealing live experience sprawled across triples and multi-albums, and that divisive, connoisseurs-only outing with Dylan. BY PETER WATTS

LIKE the incomprehensible immensity of the cosmos, the vast discography of Grateful Dead live albums is dizzying and panic-inducing for the uninitiated. No band has placed so much emphasis on their live recordings by making so much of it available in so many formats, and no fanbase has embraced such an array of material with the same degree of intimidating knowledge and rigour. In among the canonical lives (*Live/Dead*, *Europe '72* and *Skull & Roses*) and the archival series like *Dick's Picks* and the *Europe '72* volumes, the band have released a further half-dozen contemporary live albums, sometimes as contract-fulfillers, occasionally to mark anniversaries or perhaps to acknowledge one-off concepts such as the legendary match-up with Bob Dylan.

The confusing nature of this material is epitomised by **History Of The Grateful Dead, Volume One** ★★ WARNER BROS, 1973 which is usually known as 'Bear's Choice' to differentiate it from *Historic Dead*, a non-contractual and therefore non-canonical recording from the Avalon in 1966 that was sneaked out by MGM in 1971. 'Bear's Choice' drew on recordings from Fillmore East in 1970 and was compiled by Owsley Stanley partly as a tribute to the recently deceased Pigpen. The first side was filled with acoustic folk, blues and country covers and a version of "Black Peter" of sustained, lingering charm. The second side features the band plugged-in with Pigpen taking lead on a fine 18-minute spin through "Smokestack Lightning" followed by a cover of Otis's "Too Hot To Handle" that might well have played on Chris and Rich Robinson's teenage stereos. It was reissued in 2003 with four additional tracks.

The album was meant to be the first in a series. But while that never happened it did perhaps provide a guideline for *Dick's Picks*. Next out was that Dead favourite, the live double. **Steal Your Face** ★★★ GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 1976 was recorded in October 1974 at the Winterland Ballroom during a farewell residency, the size and complexity of the Dead's touring equipment having effectively forced the band off the road. The record – along with the accompanying *The Grateful Dead Movie* – was put out to compensate for lost touring income and featured tracks chosen by Lesh, who counterintuitively but rather charmingly filled it with (relatively) short, unimprovised numbers. Because of this and some truly terrible sound, it has a horrible rep but at this distance it's rather sweet and unquestionably unique, with a handful of gems in "Stella Blue", "Ship Of Fools" and "Casey Jones". The classic cover of the lightning skull logo is a nice flashback to 'Bear's Choice', which debuted that image. Issued on the Dead's own label, it was rereleased in 1979 and then went out of print until 1989. The more recent versions have vastly improved sound, making it more than palatable. It's much better than its reputation suggests.

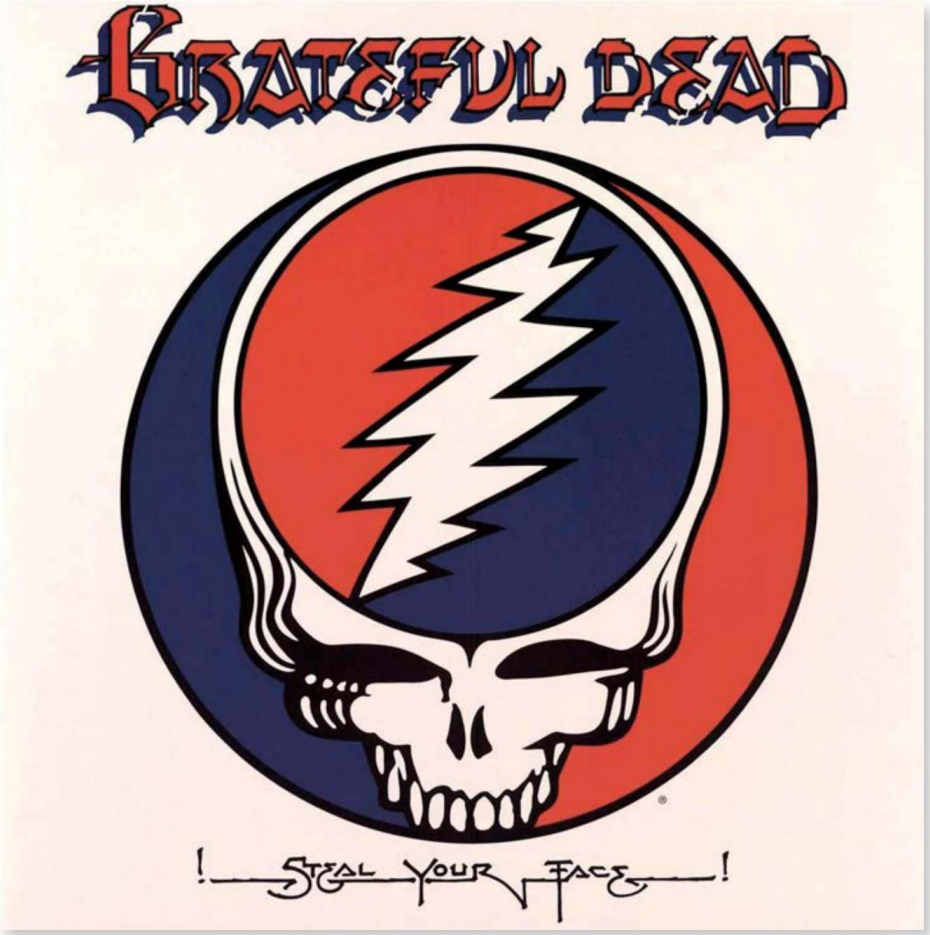
For the band's 15th anniversary in 1980, the Dead played a bunch of special shows at the Warfield Theater in San Francisco and Radio City Music Hall in New York and then decided to release them in the form of two live double albums, the only way to contain their split personality. This gave us the acoustic **Reckoning** ★★★ ARISTA, 1981 and the electric **Dead Set** ★★★ ARISTA, 1981. The former is delightful, featuring a batch of warmly delivered folk and country tunes alongside a handful of originals. It's very much in the spirit of the Dead's early-'60s pre-history but also *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* 10 years previously. Highlights include "The Race Is On", a great George Jones number, and a lovely take on "Ripple". A 2004 Rhino reissue added a stack of alternative material.

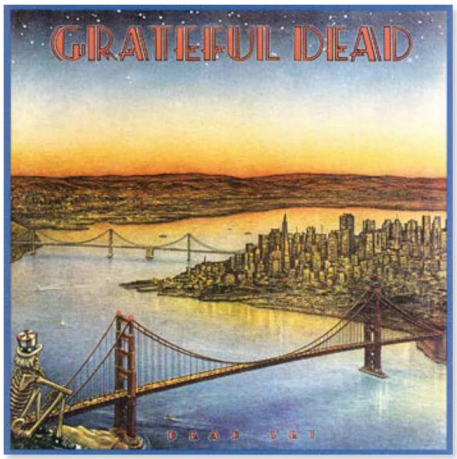
Four months after *Reckoning*'s release came *Dead Set*, an attempt to capture the ebb and flow of a typical Dead

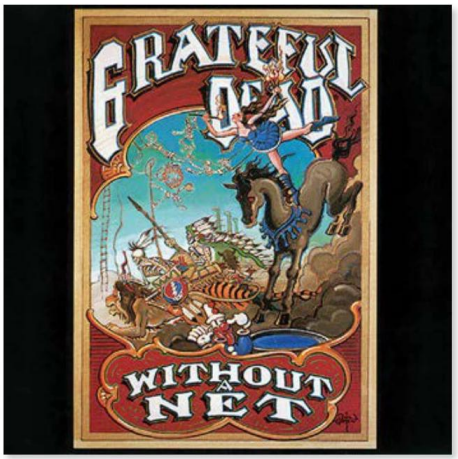
CRITICS' VERDICT

"*Steal Your Face* was recorded at another bad time for the band. Garcia said, 'With Pigpen gone it's not like The Grateful Dead any more', and of course it couldn't be. I see it as the close of one era and the inauguration of the next."
MAX BELL, NME, JULY 24, 1976

"*Dylan & The Dead* is a historic landmark in the contributors' careers... Between them they make the seven songs *happen*, each one a drama unto itself... Dylan and the Dead bring out the best in each other. At their best, they both make the world turn a little slower and, in my book, that's genius."
STEVE SUTHERLAND, MELODY MAKER, FEBRUARY 11, 1989







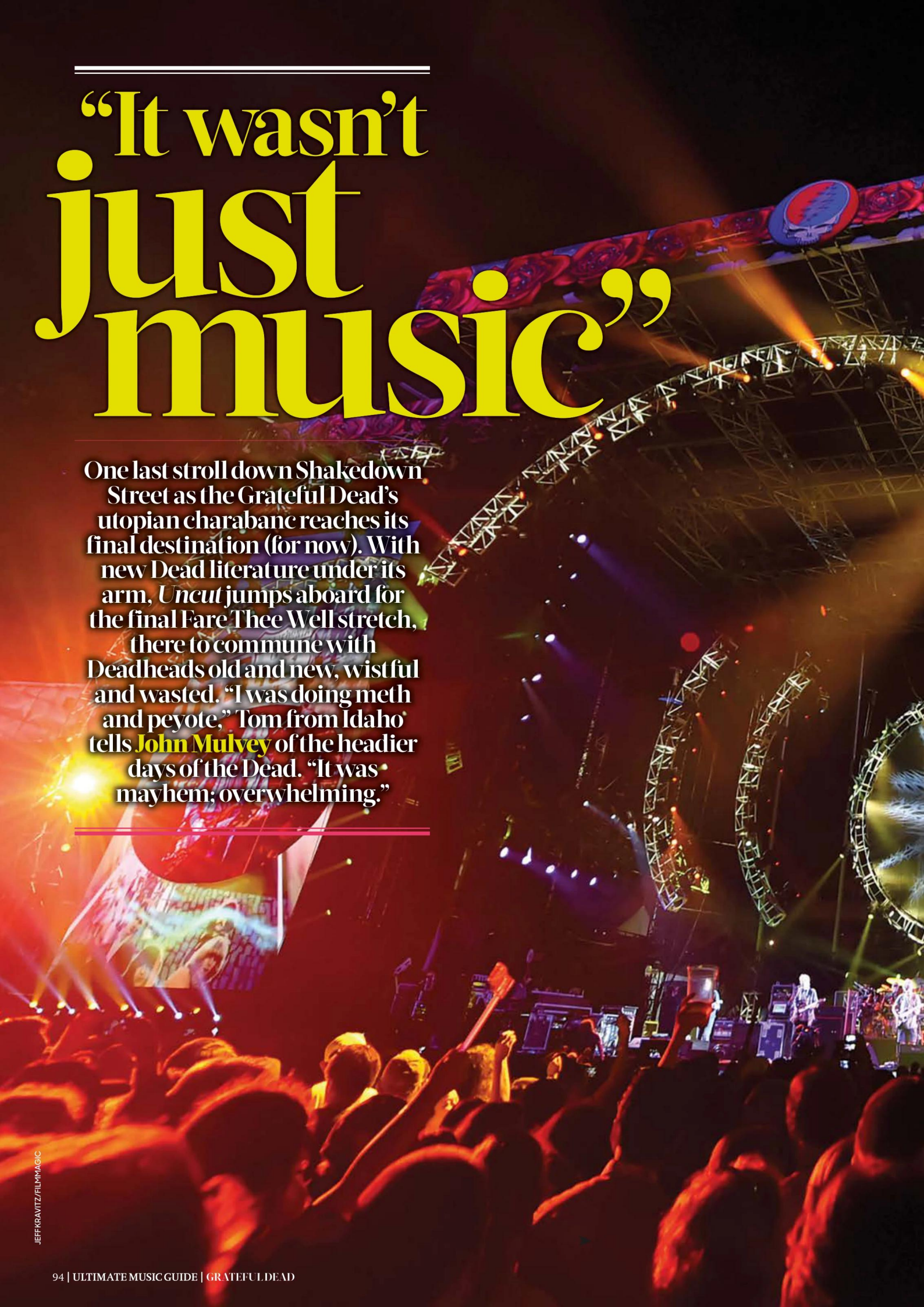
performance, complete with "Drums" (drum solo) and "Space" (improvised instrumental), albeit edited to fit the limitations of a vinyl record. Featuring the recording debut of new keyboard player Brent Mydland, there are solid-to-good versions of recent tracks like "Samson And Delilah" and "Fire On The Mountain", old favourites like "Candyman", "Deal", a reimagined "New Minglewood Blues" and "Friend Of The Devil" and the first recorded version of "Little Red Rooster", which sees Bob Weir recall some of the flavour of Pigpen's "Smokestack Lightning" back on 'Bear's Choice'.

The Dead's next offering came in 1989. **Dylan & The Dead** ★★ **COLUMBIA, 1989** is widely considered to be a turkey, featuring the band backing Dylan on seven of his finest originals during a stadium tour in pre-*Oh Mercy* 1987. The Dead thought it merited an album, and Dylan was not obstructive to the idea. Popular wisdom is that it stinks like a beached whale but it's oddly engaging if you embrace it as anecdotal evidence of Dylan's unpredictable ways live. You expect the unexpected – but we listen as even legendary improvisers like the Dead are occasionally caught off-guard by Dylan's mercurial setlist decisions. It starts promisingly with a good "Slow Train" but a clumsy "I Want You" derails the show and it never gets back on track. The band are sprightly, but they don't have a great deal to get their teeth into, while Dylan's vocals and even Rick Griffin's cover feel a little uncommitted. It's not the worst album you'll ever listen to, but it's one strictly for the adventurous or the completist.

Both Dylan and the Dead bounced back pretty quickly, Dylan with *Oh Mercy* and the Dead on the triple whammy **Without A Net** ★★★★ **ARISTA, 1990**, which saw them embrace the space of compact disc in a way they'd never quite managed on vinyl. This was taken from concerts performed through the autumn and spring of 1989 and 1990, which Garcia then patched together into a cohesive set that many felt was the most accurate – ie, longest – approximation of a Dead concert yet released. Even Rick Griffin was back on form, producing some fine cover art on a circus theme that celebrates the band's seat-of-the-pants approach to performance. There's a lot of Dead to get your teeth into, with terrific versions of "Cassidy", "Bird Song" and the fan-favourite "Help On The Way"/"Slipknot!"/"Franklin's Tower" medley plus a guest spot from Branford Marsalis on a 16-minute "Eyes Of The World". If you like your Dead to sprawl, and let's face it, you probably do, this is as good a place to go as any. ●

"It wasn't just music"

One last stroll down Shakedown Street as the Grateful Dead's utopian charabanc reaches its final destination (for now). With new Dead literature under its arm, *Uncut* jumps aboard for the final Fare Thee Well stretch, there to commune with Deadheads old and new, wistful and wasted. "I was doing meth and peyote," Tom from Idaho tells **John Mulvey** of the headier days of the Dead. "It was mayhem; overwhelming."

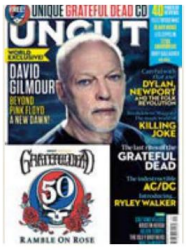


JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC

"Space" men: Fare Thee Well, A Tribute To The Grateful Dead, July 5, 2015, in Chicago, Illinois

Phish frontman Trey Anastasio (left) with Bill Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh, Mickey Hart and Bob Weir at Soldier Field in Chicago, July 3, 2015

UNCUT SEPTEMBER 2015



THREE hours before the Grateful Dead begin their brief and poignant farewell tour in Santa Clara, California, a couple called Jeremy and Karen are setting up their stall of bespoke tie-dyed articles in the parking lot. As they arrange the $70 silk shirts and $10 bandannas, they are talking of their times on the road following the band; journeys that began in the 1970s for both of them, and which reached a sustained climax for Jeremy between 1987 and 1995, when he was present at every one of the Dead's last 300-odd shows.

"It wasn't just music," he says now, looking like a cross between Jerry Garcia and John Goodman. "The term Utopia is very maligned in society, especially in this age. What we had wasn't a working blueprint for Utopia, but it was an unfolding better way of living, away from the safety net of a society that acts as either a sieve or a meat grinder. It was a different way of doing things. It had all the regular trappings and problems of society, but it offered hope."

A few hundred metres away, Santa Clara's year-old Levi's Stadium, normally home to the San Francisco 49ers, awaits today's influx of 83,000 multifarious Deadheads. Lifers like Jeremy and Karen mingle with new young fans, and a great many middle-aged men and women whose love of the Dead has endured long after their own quests for Utopia have ended. Over the next two weekends, the four remaining core members of the Grateful Dead and their accomplices will play five Fare Thee Well shows, two here and three in Chicago, which will reportedly net $40 million in ticket sales alone. Out in the parking lots, however, a more idiosyncratic brand of entrepreneurship is flourishing, even while cops patrol the aisles on golf buggies.

This is Shakedown Street, storied hub of the grey economy that has long clustered around the Dead, an ad hoc marketplace for all your quainter hippie needs. Hash pipes proliferate, as do conch shells and vegetarian burritos. There are drum circles, hackysack players, dogs in bandannas, and T-shirt memorials to Brent Mydland, one of the multiple keyboard players who died during the Grateful Dead's original lifespan between 1965 and 1995. A large man loudly advertises the hash brownies that he is selling, neatly packaged in branded plastic containers. Another wanders through the crowds, carrying a mysterious box labelled "Take a gift".

Jeremy, though, has a living to make. The day Jerry Garcia died, Tuesday August 9, 1995, he postponed thoughts of getting a job for a good 24 hours. The next day he found work at the University of Santa Cruz, but soon took to the road again, selling his tie-dyes at festivals through the summers, until it became harder and harder to survive the winters. Finally, he had an idea – America's only make-your-own tie-dye store, A Brighter World. "Jeremy's one of the few people who made it," says Karen. "Everybody had their little things – I crocheted crazy stuff to get me across the country – but he actually turned it into a business. People who can combine the hippie thing with a work ethic, they can find a really interesting way to live."

Jeremy claims he is mostly here to promote his business. After several hundred shows, though, a profound emotional attachment to the Dead remains, transcending his cynicism over the premise of Fare Thee Well, and his scepticism that the band can still be meaningful without Garcia. "I just hope they play like it's their last one, as opposed to going through the motions," he finally decides. "It could be like going to someone's house for a home-cooked meal but they got sick, so they ordered out. It's OK, but I hope it won't be like that..."

Request or plea?: a fan in Chicago, July 3, 2015

LAST May, Bill Kreutzmann published *Deal*, an autobiography of his time playing drums in the Grateful Dead. It's a pretty rough book, and one that doesn't add much to the accumulated weight of Dead scholarship, but it does encapsulate the band's mix of nebulous Aquarian idealism and frontier machismo: besides the drugs and the jams, the reckless use of firearms played a key role in the band's bonding rituals.

It is also a book that must have been submitted to the printers before Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir and Mickey Hart decided to reactivate their band for this valedictory round of shows. At one point, Kreutzmann compares the Grateful Dead to an arch that people would pass underneath en route to "a Utopian island where the gardens looked like amphitheatres, the mall looked like Shakedown Street and the houses were made out of tents."

"Jerry Garcia," Kreutzmann continues, "was the keystone of this magical arch. You take that out, and not only does the arch come tumbling down, crushing all who are stuck beneath, but also, it crushes the only road that leads to that Utopian dream."

Later he articulates, with a bluntness that is more typical of his prose, the suspicions of many Dead fans following the announcement of Fare Thee Well: "The Grateful Dead without Jerry Garcia would be like the Miles Davis Quintet without Miles Davis... It's a reenactment, nostalgia, mere bathos."

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC, DANIEL BOCZARSKI/GETTY IMAGES

Deadheads assemble: Santa Clara, June 27, 2015

Kreutzmann's get-out clause, as the first Fare Thee Well show draws near, is made clear on the ticket: this is not technically a Grateful Dead concert. In the 20 years since Garcia died, the surviving members have intermittently reconfigured themselves in different permutations – The Other Ones, Furthur, The Dead – to keep the music alive, and of course to keep the bank accounts healthy. For these last five gigs, however, the band name is delicately obscured. "Remember, it's called 'Fare Thee Well, Celebrating 50 Years Of The Grateful Dead'," cautions the promoter Peter Shapiro, a couple of weeks before the show. "That's how we branded it. Jerry was the soul of the band – they all know that, we all know that – but we're gonna do it one more time."

The last time the "core four" came together was for a tour as The Dead, in 2009. "We've put the past behind us," Mickey Hart told *Uncut* then, referring to the tensions that had dogged inter-band relations since Garcia's death. "You can't play Grateful Dead music with someone you don't like." Kreutzmann, though, recalls in *Deal* that the 2009 tour turned out to be so fractious that it "spelled the end of the Dead". "The head trips," he remembers, "were so monstrous... You're doing it just to earn money and that's not good enough. It doesn't honour the music or the legacy."

Shapiro, a Deadhead with a long history of working with the bandmembers individually, ruefully admits the business of reuniting the quartet involved "some good reverse jiu-jitsu". Lesh, at 75 the oldest of the survivors, appears to have been pivotal to the process, reportedly refusing to countenance a full tour (rumours persist that Weir, Kreutzmann and Hart will head out, with John Mayer, for more dates later in the year). Since the shows were announced in January, every one of Shapiro's decisions has been critiqued by the fans, from his ticketing schemes to his choice of venues: Soldier Field in Chicago is where Garcia played his last concert, and Kreutzmann recalls waking the heroin-addicted guitarist from a doze in the middle of that decidedly non-vintage set.

Most controversially, there has been the selection of a stand-in for Garcia. Warren Haynes, who subbed on guitar in 2009 and who also spent many years filling in for Duane Allman in The Allman Brothers, missed the cut this time. John Kadcelik, who graduated from Dead tribute bands to join Weir and Lesh in Furthur, was evidently disqualified in order to maintain a fragile band entente: Kreutzmann pointedly disparages him as "Fake Jerry" in *Deal*.

The lucky guitarist is Trey Anastasio, the frontman of Phish. For many years, Phish have had a precarious reputation in the pantheon of jam bands as the Dead's most obvious heirs: a group whose huge popularity is enhanced, not diminished, by the digressive intricacy of their music. The analogy is not a precise one, though, and Phish's credibility with Dead fans has long been compromised by their propensity for a certain prog wackiness, and the fact that Anastasio is as indebted to Frank Zappa as he is to Jerry Garcia.

The size of Phish's following, and his apparent lack of political baggage with all four Dead survivors, make Anastasio a pragmatic choice, but Shapiro is enthusiastic about his diligence as much as his improvising skills. Anastasio has been preparing for six months, employing a Broadway orchestrator to write out charts of around 100 songs from the Dead catalogue. "Trey's not only been studying Jerry," says Shapiro, "he's been studying the people Jerry studied."

"Trey has been kicking ass," Jeff Chimenti, organist in the Fare Thee Well lineup, tells *Uncut* during the band's uncharacteristically focused, "very busy" rehearsal period. "He's worked hard and it's evident in his performance, besides the 'position' in the band that he has to deal with, so to speak... I'm sure you know what I mean..."

> **"YOU CAN'T PLAY DEAD MUSIC WITH PEOPLE YOU DON'T LIKE"**
> BILL KREUTZMANN

According to Dennis McNally, the band's former publicist and the author of their definitive history, *A Long Strange Trip*, Anastasio is "a lovely guy, and a fine guitarist, and I think he will do as good a job as anybody could. I think he's smart enough not to try to sound like Jerry. But part of me sort of feels sorry for him because, y'know, what a job..."

FORTY-THREE miles from San Francisco, Santa Clara does not feel quite like a spiritual home of the Grateful Dead. Larry Livermore, who saw the Dead at least 25 times before becoming a key player in the Bay Area punk scene and discovering Green Day, describes the city as "basically the Milton Keynes of Silicon Valley". "I saw them in many places – parks, dancehalls, at Woodstock," he says, "but I think I might have drawn the line at Santa Clara."

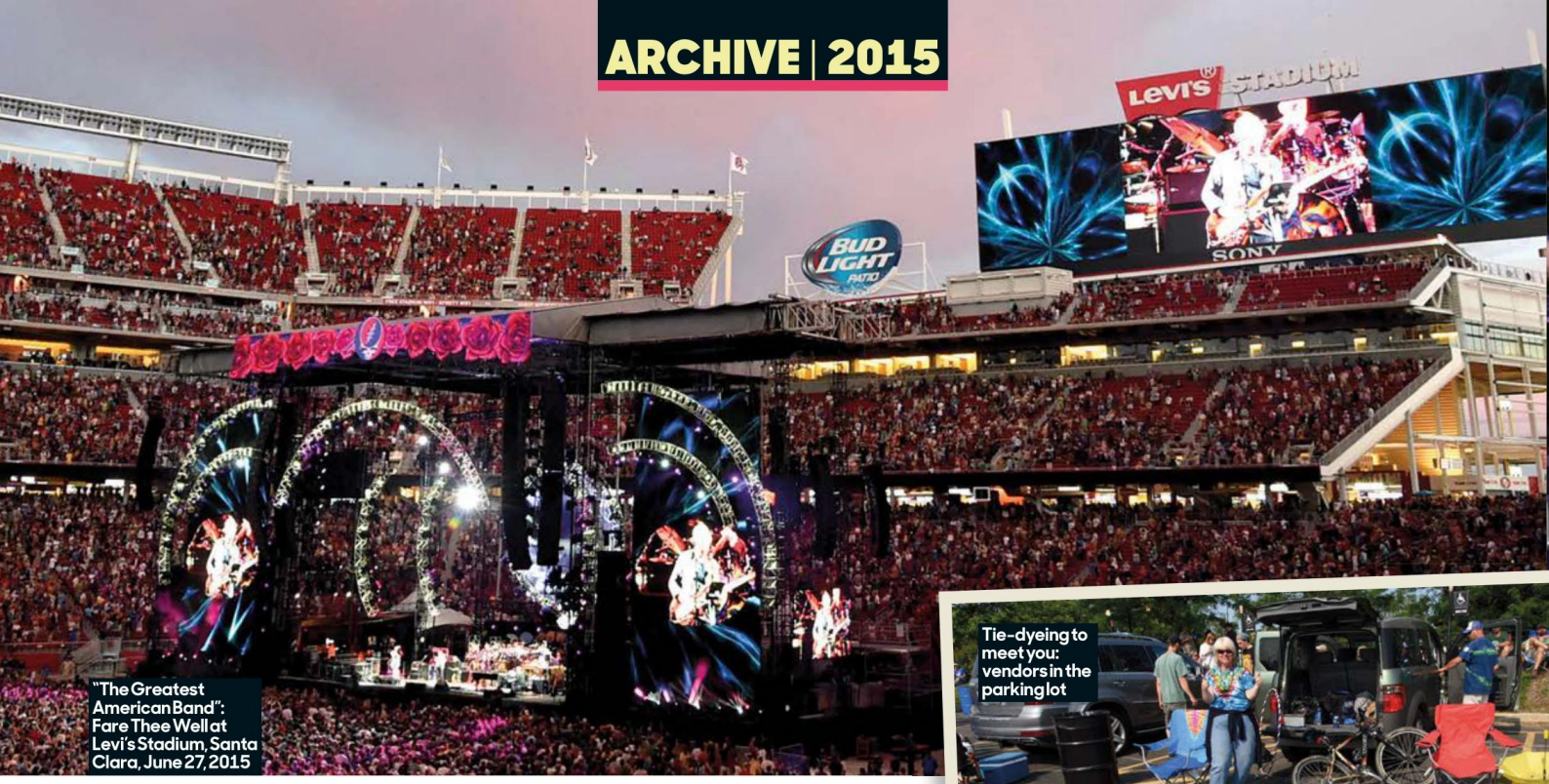
This, though, is more or less where the Dead began, growing up in nearby Palo Alto and working their way through local pizza restaurants and music stores until Ken Kesey's acid tests led them into San Francisco itself. In David Browne's new Dead biography, *So Many Roads*, he describes a night in 1962 when Jorma Kaukonen, soon to form Jefferson Airplane, arrived at Santa Clara College from his home in Washington DC. On Kaukonen's first day on campus, Browne writes, "He wandered into a folk club and met Garcia and a young, throat-shredding Texas transplant named Janis Joplin."

In the intervening 50-odd years, much has changed in the area. "When Jerry was growing up, what is now Silicon Valley was all fruit groves," says Dennis McNally. "In the Dead's lifetime, it has become one of the economic engines of America and, in fact, the world. It encapsulates the history of the last 50 years, 75 years."

Bucolic hippie innocence, evolving into digital idealism, maturing to technocratic capitalism in its most intense form: it's a neat summary of the journey undertaken by at least some of the Dead's followers. The band's fans were early mainstays of online messageboards, while Steve Jobs and his partner at Apple, Steve Wozniak, McNally notes, were formative Deadheads (Wozniak promoted an '80s festival headlined by the Dead; Jobs' widow, Laurene Powell, is reportedly present at the Santa Clara show).

It's a transformation that some will also see as of a piece with the mainstream compromises made by the Dead in the latter stages of their career, and by the organisers of Fare Thee Well. The Levi's Stadium, for instance, is not the most idyllic of venues. When the band had growth spurts in the mid-'70s and '80s, however, such vast spaces became their home for most of the summer months. "Jerry once complained about playing a stadium show because he felt he had to make the music cartoonish," says McNally. "Very broad gestures. I remember a band meeting in December 1985, in which the band sat and agreed, rather ➤

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES, JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



"The Greatest American Band": Fare Thee Well at Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara, June 27, 2015

Tie-dyeing to meet you: vendors in the parking lot

stonily and with some regret, that they would have to do stadium shows because of the demand. It was not a joyful decision."

Kreutzmann, true to form, is equally sceptical in *Deal*, complaining about how the lack of nuance in stadium shows made them "safe... and safe equals boring". Ominously, he also takes some perverse pride in listing all the significant gigs that his band messed up through their original career. "Just like at Monterey Pop and all the other big shows," he writes, referring to their performance at Woodstock, "the Grateful Dead blew it."

Back at the tie-dye stall on Shakedown Street, however, Karen is philosophical: "Yeah, we all wish they'd done it the old way where the tour 'Heads got the first shot at the tickets; we all wish it was a smaller venue. We're all gonna complain and bitch, but this is all we're gonna get. Part of me thinks we should all just shut up and get over it."

Above the Levi's Stadium, a plane makes repeated attempts to draw a peace sign with its vapour trail. Inside, one concourse has been given over to Participation Row, where stalls represent a motley collection of charities and pressure groups sanctioned by Dead members. At its furthest extreme the action is especially interesting, with representatives of MAPS – the Multidisciplinary Association For Psychedelic Studies, who advocate for the psychotherapeutic use of LSD and MDMA in treating life-threatening illnesses – positioned right next to the Owsley Stanley Foundation. "Bear" Stanley's home-made acid fuelled the psychedelic revolution in San Francisco, but it is his work as the Dead's soundman, and as someone who recorded more than a thousand concerts by everyone from Miles Davis to Doc Watson, that the Foundation promotes, raising funds to digitally preserve his disintegrating tape archive.

On the field inside the Stadium, the amateur tapers have, as tradition dictates, a demarcated area for them to record the show. As Radiohead's "House Of Cards" fades, however, and the seven-piece band amble on and slope into a loose, jazzy jam, even the most assiduous fans might be hard pressed to identify the song with which the Grateful Dead begin Fare Thee Well.

Five minutes in, a shape emerges. This is "Truckin'", a chemically enhanced road choogle from 1970's *American Beauty*, and a rare anthem in a catalogue that is mostly too imaginative and devious to make such obvious moves. Bob Weir is singing Garcia's old part, and while Anastasio is grinning so broadly that it seems he can barely believe his luck, his playing is commendably unostentatious. Much of the fancier work, in fact, is done by the two keyboardists: pianist Bruce Hornsby, who took time off from his solo career to become a floating Dead member in the early '90s; and Chimenti, a longtime associate of Lesh and Weir, who is apparently playing Brent Mydland's old Hammond B3.

"Truckin'" provides a gentle opening to a show that stretches over four-and-a-half hours, including an hour-long interval, and features 17 songs – none of which were originally recorded any later than 1970. The first set gradually builds up speed, taking in a frail and lovely "Uncle John's Band", admittedly a little more Margaritaville than Wild West honky-tonk, before gaining momentum after 40 minutes with a wonderful "Cumberland Blues".

There are beautifully evoked flashbacks to the band's dancehall roots, baroque psychedelic grooves like "Alligator" and "Born Cross-Eyed". Perhaps best and most unexpected of all, Anastasio pilots a scything take on "Cream Puff War", a rarity from their eponymous '67 debut that's been neglected by the band for the past 48 years and that, had it not been so thoroughly overshadowed by what came after, might now be regarded as a garage nugget to match Love's "7 And 7 Is".

At the climax of "Viola Lee Blues", in the most elevating jam of the first half, and on the weekend that the United States legalises gay marriage, a perfect rainbow appears above the stage. It is all, perhaps, too good to be true.

BEFORE the show begins, Karen from the tie-dye stall tries to explain how the Dead crowd became factionalised in the mid-'80s, when an influx of unruly younger fans brought new levels of chaos and disruption to the band's shows and generally "pissed off everyone". "We weren't here to get wasted," she says. "We were here to see the shows and the whole LSD thing was part of the experience. We didn't make people mad in small towns. We knew not to sleep downtown, not to panhandle, not to drag our dirty puppies through restaurants.

"The best quote I ever heard was, 'It used to be a zoo of a kind, now it's kind of a zoo.' It was said by one of my friends, tripping in the middle of the night. I think," she laughs, "his name was Wind."

The day after, a couple of miles from the stadium, I meet a dishevelled twentysomething who is a kind of millennial equivalent of the people Karen described. He has only grubby socks on his feet, and is begging because he is "desperate for a pair of shoes for tonight's show". The events that befell him after the previous night's concert are, to say the least, unclear, and he has no idea where his friends are or where he is meant to be staying. Throughout it all, though, he has held on to his skateboard, and to a cache of "really good LSD I'm trying to get rid of". With a very old solution to a very modern problem, he offers acid in exchange for the use of a cellphone charger.

It would be churlish, of course, to see his behaviour as dishonouring the drug etiquette of vintage Deadheads. Tom, from Idaho, is a veteran of 50-odd shows by the Dead and their offshoots, and first saw the band at the massive Watkins Glen show in 1973, when they shared a bill with the Allman Brothers and The Band in front of 600,000 people. Tom drove down to Watkins Glen from Boston, and remembers it as "one of the wildest times of my life. I was doing meth and peyote. I was 18, with nine friends, we were nuts. By the time we went home there were only three of

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC, DANIEL BOCZARSKI/GETTY IMAGES

Fare Thee Well and goodnight: (l–r) Bill Kreutzmann, Trey Anastasio, Mickey Hart, Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Jeff Chimenti and Bruce Hornsby, Chicago, July 5, 2015

us left, the rest of them we lost. They couldn't handle it, they had to get the fuck out. It was mayhem; overwhelming."

At 9.40, the atmosphere for the evening's second set is sensational. Traditionally, the latter half of Dead shows privileged the more expansive and exploratory side of their art, and tonight is no exception. After a prologue of "Cryptical Envelopment" – quaveringly sung by Phil Lesh in a voice that, for all its weathered charisma, remains mostly unsuitable for fronting a rock band – the literal and metaphorical fireworks begin. "Dark Star" was established as the Dead's signature jam in 1968, and tonight's 30-minute version is a bracing reiteration of the band's uncanny chemistry. In *So Many Roads*, David Browne describes a "Dark Star" from November 1969. He writes of how Lesh, with his wildly ambulatory basslines, briefly appeared to be "wrestling for control of the song" before "Garcia would take command but then retreat back into the song's haze... Lesh wouldn't be steering 'Dark Star' for long," Browne observes. "In fact, no one would."

Trey Anastasio is, as discussed, no Jerry Garcia. As the 2015 "Dark Star" unravels, however, his discretion acts as a useful analogue for the slippery ways in which Garcia subverted his role of lead guitarist. Like the best Dead jams, all the elements – Anastasio's sculpted leads and Weir's impressionistic rhythm guitar flecks, the two percolating drummers, the two elegantly interpretive keyboardists – seem to be on their own trajectories: following orbits which only occasionally intersect; untethered by anything remotely resembling an orthodox bassline. Its success seems more down to chance than traditional musical logic and, if Anastasio succeeds at anything tonight, it is in insinuating himself into such a mystifyingly intuitive unit.

At times like this, the Dead's ability to hold the attention of nearly 100,000 people while playing radically weird music, remains astonishing. The traditional "Drums > Space" jam is a special challenge, beginning with Kreutzmann and Hart methodically working round several dozen percussion instruments, and progressing through a kind of tribal techno that is, perhaps unwittingly, reminiscent of a Spiral Tribe or Megadog rave in the early '90s. When their bandmates return for the "Space" improvisation, Anastasio finally slips in some of the prog quackery that makes much of the Phish canon a hard sell to those averse to such whimsical excess.

It is, though, a rare indulgence on Anastasio's part. Discipline isn't something traditionally associated with continuous jams that last for nearly two-and-a-half hours, but this is the prevailing mood of the second set, and its two magnificent highlights. First there is "St Stephen", euphorically punching its way out of the skronk. Then, at the end, there is Bonnie Dobson's "Morning Dew", originally attempted by the band on their debut album, and here essayed with a bluesy grace and spaciousness that feels restrained even when Anastasio lets his notes hang and arc in the air, and Bob Weir, lugubrious in trademark shorts and sandals, pushes his hearty but limited voice as far as it will possibly go.

Finally, Hornsby leads them through one more of the homespun singalongs from *Workingman's Dead*, "Casey Jones". Apposite quotes for most occasions leap out of the discography of any band with a long career. The Grateful Dead are no exception, with a rich catalogue – mostly written by Garcia's old friend, Robert Hunter – that presents risk, fate and mortality as part of some picaresque outlaw adventure. The refrain of "Casey Jones", though – "*Trouble ahead, trouble behind*" – feels particularly useful. For all the stage-managed finality of Fare Thee Well, this is very much an ongoing story.

"JERRY WAS A HUGE PART OF THE BAND, BUT SOME NIGHTS JERRY SUCKED"
TOM FROM IDAHO

Over the next four shows, the band play 68 more songs from every phase of their career, only repeating two ("Cumberland Blues" and, not unreasonably, "Truckin'"). The phrase "Greatest American Band" is thrown around a lot, and Barack Obama sends his regards. The first-night rainbow is investigated at length, and initial stories that it was a son et lumière stunt appear to be discounted. The general feeling mixes exhilaration with qualified relief: perhaps Phil Lesh sang a little more often than necessary; perhaps the pace dragged now and again; maybe the setlists ranged far and wide in a way that only someone attending all five nights could really appreciate. Nevertheless, consensus suggests Anastasio nailed his seemingly impossible brief and, for once, the Grateful Dead didn't screw up the big shows.

It's hard to portray the whole Fare Thee Well project as anything other than a lucratively nostalgic endeavour, with its attendant live streams, cinema screenings, imminent commemorative boxsets and so forth; as one last trip for the baby-boomer generation, and for those successive generations who dreamed of being a part of it. At the first night in Santa Clara, though, the crowd is celebratory rather than sentimental, and pragmatically informed about what happens next to the music they love. "I saw Jerry at least 30 times," says Tom from Idaho. "Jerry was a huge part of the band, but some nights Jerry sucked."

Tom raves about Jeff Chimenti and his various activities, while a woman who has flown in from Ecuador, and who went out on the road with Lesh and Weir's Furthur rather than with the Dead themselves, is not the only fan who proselytises about a new San Francisco band. They are called the Golden Gate Wingmen, and feature Chimenti alongside the redoubtable "Fake Jerry", John Kadcelik. For many, it seems, the Fare Thee Well shows are not last rites so much as one more manifestation of a scene that is boundlessly complex and incestuous. A scene where founding fathers jam with young tyros and tribute bands; where one former Dead keyboardist – Tom Constanten, who served between 1968 and 1970 – was not recalled for Fare Thee Well, but currently figures in a long-established covers band called Jazz Is Dead. Where Phil Lesh And Friends frequently gather at Lesh's own San Rafael club, Terrapin Crossroads, to replay entire Dead shows from the archives.

The scene is rooted in the past, but it understands how gifted improvising musicians can find infinite possibilities in a small constellation of songs. In this telling of the story, the mass impact of Fare Thee Well is a glitch that will pass soon enough, and leave the true believers to get on with its long, involved, compelling business.

David Browne begins *So Many Roads* with a wondering assessment of the band from Carolyn "Mountain Girl" Garcia, the Merry Prankster who became Jerry Garcia's wife. "How *did* they get together and relate to each other?" she ponders. "They really worked on it. They wanted it badly. They were glued to the enterprise."

The Grateful Dead may be formally over, but the enterprise, the songs, and many of the players – in whatever form they next manifest themselves – remain indefatigably alive. Trouble behind, as the old song goes, trouble ahead...

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC

THE SOLO RECORDS

JERRY GARCIA

RELEASED 1971-1998

Introducing Jerry, the workaholic. Alongside the Dead, Garcia managed a solo journey rich in collaborations, bluegrass sidelines and career highlights. *BY* TYLER WILCOX

FOR some musicians, the Grateful Dead would have offered more than enough creative stimulation for one lifetime. Not Jerry Garcia. In addition to his main gig, the guitarist built an entire solo career that ran parallel to the Dead for a quarter-century, offering up an alternate timeline packed with buried treasures and under-the-radar gems (as well as some very familiar moments).

Jerry's image may have been that of the consummate laid-back hippie. But in reality, he was a complete workaholic. There's a paraphrased quote in *Skeleton Key: A Dictionary for Deadheads* that sums up his musical modus operandi: "Garcia has said that all he needs is one day off a week, and that in an ideal world, he'd be playing six gigs weekly: two with the Dead, two with the Jerry Garcia Band, and two playing with an acoustic group like the Black Mountain Boys." In other words, Garcia wanted to live and breathe music. Time spent away from the studio or the stage was wasted time.

Garcia's solo adventures kicked off officially in 1971 with **Hooteroll?** ★★★ **(DOUGLAS RECORDS, 1971)**, a collaboration with Bay Area organist Howard Wales that's often as weird and wild as its name suggests. Taking their cues from the heady jazz-rock fusions of the time (Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, Santana's *Abraxas* etc.), Garcia and Wales delightedly run circles around one another, encouraging ever more "out" playing. For more, seek out **Side Trips, Volume One** ★★★ **(GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 1998)**, capturing the duo's extended flights of fancy at San Francisco's tiny Matrix club in 1970.

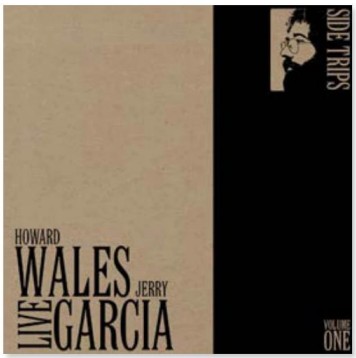
The Matrix is also where Garcia struck up a fruitful partnership with another local keyboardist named Merl Saunders. For a period in the early-to-mid 1970s, it seemed as though whenever Jerry wasn't on the road, he was onstage or in the studio with Saunders. "Anything [Garcia] played was very musical," Saunders remembered. "He would take chances. He knew how to do a rhythm on any kind of tune – gospel, blues, jazz. I was amazed." Together, they recorded two studio albums, **Heavy Turbulence** ★★★ **(FANTASY, 1972)** and **Fire Up** ★★★ **(FANTASY, 1973)**, both of which were released under Saunders' name, but are actually full collabs between the pair. Backed primarily by the rhythm section of bassist John Kahn and drummer Bill Vitt and featuring Creedence Clearwater Revival's Tom Fogerty, these records are full of low-key charms and a relaxed chemistry between Garcia and Saunders. Here, Jerry is able to indulge in his funkier, more economic side. Not that he and Saunders didn't stretch out and just jam, though; the fantastic four-disc **Keystone Companions** boxed set ★★★★★ **(FANTASY, 2012)**, recorded live in 1973, features lengthy workouts on "My Funny Valentine" and "The Harder They Come", among others. And the pair's jazzier side came even more to the fore with the Legion of Mary band, also featuring sax/flute player Martin Fierro, which is well-represented on a handful of posthumous live releases.

> **GARCIA IS HOME TO SOME OF HIS MOST BELOVED SONGS**

Garcia's very first solo release under his own name — titled simply **Garcia** ★★★★★ **(WARNER BROS, 1972)**, natch — is one of the undisputed classics of his career, with the Dead or without. The 1972 LP is home to some of the most beloved tunes in the Garcia/Hunter songbook. Despite ➤

THE ALBUMS

HOOTEROLL? HOWARD WALES & JERRY GARCIA
DOUGLAS 5


SIDE TRIPS
HOWARD
WALES
JERRY
LIVE
GARCIA
VOLUME ONE

MERL SAUNDERS
Featuring Jerry Garcia and Tom Fogerty

KEYSTONE COMPANIONS
MERL SAUNDERS
JERRY GARCIA
THE COMPLETE 1973 FANTASY RECORDINGS

NGC 205
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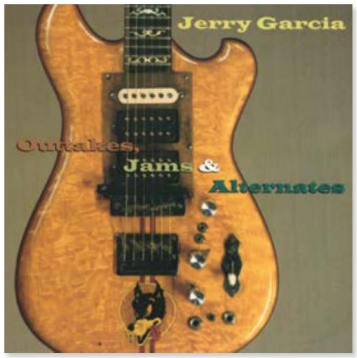
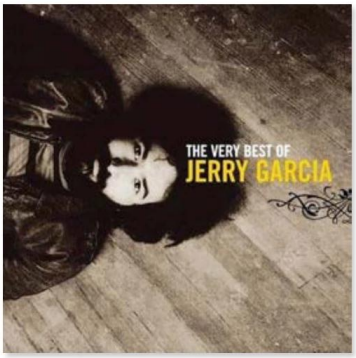
OLD & IN THE WAY
LIVE at the BOARDING HOUSE
10/1/73 - SETS 1 & 2 10/8/73 - SETS 1 & 2
Scotch 90
HIGH OUTPUT/LOW NOISE
PROFESSIONAL MASTERING
TAPE NO.
207
THE COMPLETE SHOWS

GARCIA

Jerry Garcia
Reflections

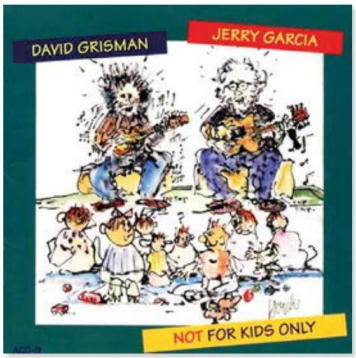

Jerry Garcia
Outtakes, Jams & Alternates

JERRY GARCIA BAND
CATS UNDER THE STARS

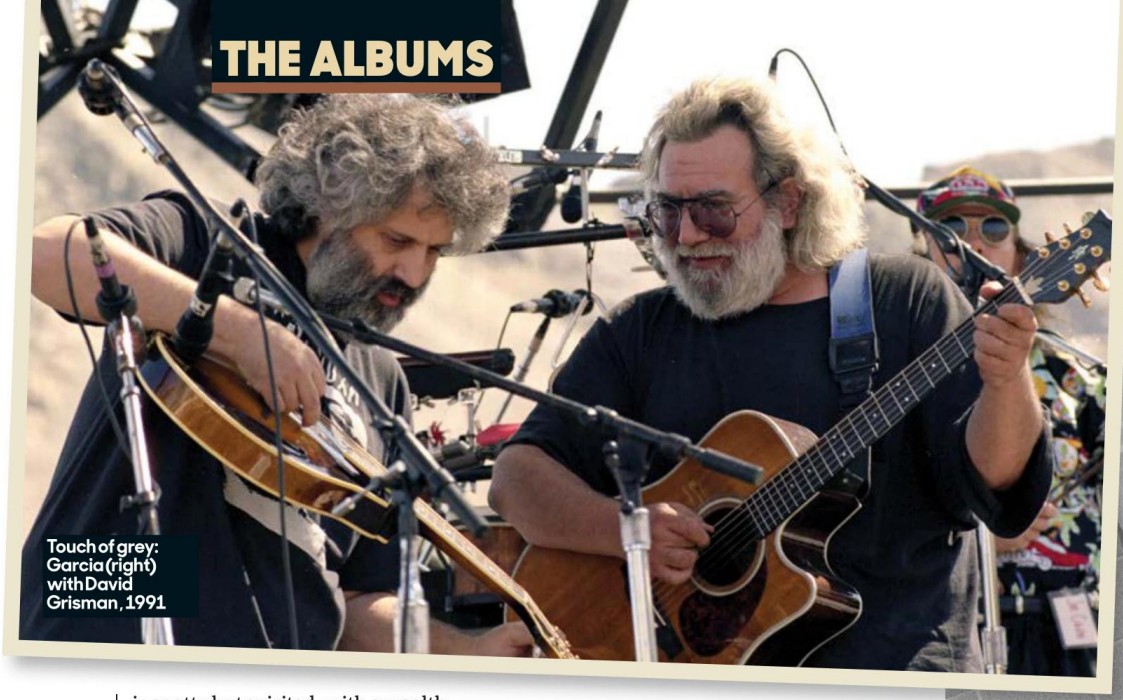

THE VERY BEST OF
JERRY GARCIA

JERRY GARCIA
RUN FOR THE ROSES

jerry GARCIA
david GRISMAN


DAVID GRISMAN
JERRY GARCIA
NOT FOR KIDS ONLY

jerry garcia & david grisman
so what
acd-33



Touch of grey: Garcia (right) with David Grisman, 1991

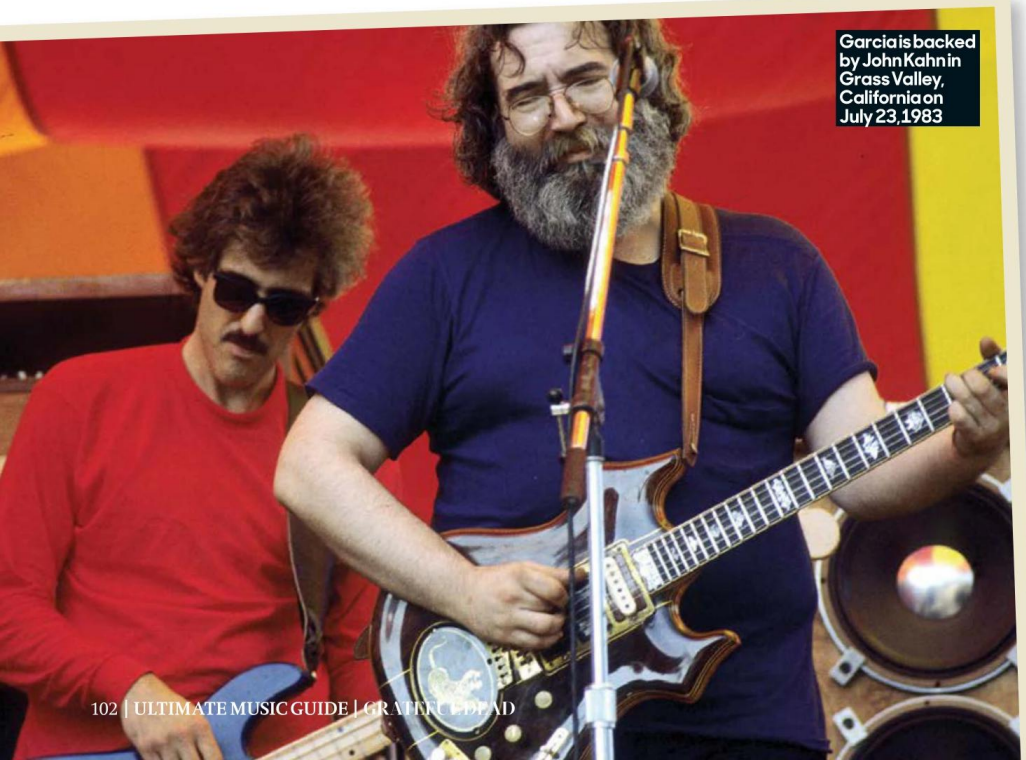
their solo studio origins, many of these would become Dead setlist highlights in the decades to come: "Deal", "Loser" and "Sugaree" among them, each one a masterpiece of cosmic Americana. Jerry handles every instrument besides drums (the Dead's Bill Kreutzmann sits in here), and he takes the opportunity to let his imagination run wild, whether playing gorgeous pedal steel on "The Wheel", gospel-tinged piano on the aching "To Lay Me Down" or visionary lead guitar on "Bird Song", his and Hunter's touching tribute to Janis Joplin. Garcia is filled out with some wacky in-studio experiments; even as Jerry was delving further into the earthiest of roots music, he still couldn't resist going way far out from time to time.

Speaking of which, 1973 saw Garcia getting back to his bluegrass banjo picking days with Old & In The Way, a short-lived string band featuring guitarist Peter Rowan, fiddler Vassar Clements, mandolin master David Grisman (that's him on *American Beauty*'s "Ripple" and "Friend of the Devil") and John Kahn on acoustic bass. The group never made it into the studio, but live recordings made in San Francisco (best heard on the four-CD **Live at the Boarding House: The Complete Shows** ★★★★ **(ACOUSTIC OASIS, 2013)** show off the quintet's easy rapport, casually dazzling the crowd with locked-in covers of Jimmie Rodgers, Bill Monroe and the Stanley Brothers. It's a true testament to Garcia's astonishing versatility that these down-home, no-frills performances came right around the time that the Dead was playing some of its most far-reaching psychedelic music onstage. From the muddy river to interstellar space, he had it all at his fingertips.

In contrast to his almost-one-man-band solo debut, on **Compliments** ★★★ **(ROUND RECORDS, 1974)** Garcia handed over the reins to bassist John Kahn, who took the guitarist on a ride through very eclectic territory. Made up primarily of covers, the LP (also confusingly known as *Garcia*) is spotty but spirited, with a wealth of high points. There's a pleasingly swampy rendition of Chuck Berry's "Let It Rock" bolstered by a tasty, Allen Toussaint-esque horn arrangement. There's a detour into gypsy jazz zones with "Russian Lullaby", the ever-nimble-fingered Garcia delivering a perfectly Django-worthy solo. Best of all is the deeply soulful rendition of Van Morrison's "He Ain't Give You None" with famed backup singers Clydie King and Merry Clayton chiming in behind a Garcia vocal for the ages.

Reflections ★★★★ **(ROUND RECORDS, 1976)** is a bit of a hodge-podge. Half of the LP featured the current lineup of the Jerry Garcia Band — Kahn, ace session pianist Nicky Hopkins, drummer Bill Vitt and Grateful Dead vocalist Donna Jean Godchaux. The other half was basically the Grateful Dead in disguise. Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Keith Godchaux and Bill Kreutzmann all show up to back Garcia on several tunes that had been in the Dead's live repertoire for several years, including the rollicking opener "Might As Well", a sprightly "They Love Each Other" and the devastating Europe '72-era slow-burner "Comes A Time". The record's highlight, however, is the beautifully downbeat "Mission In The Rain", a song as heavy as a San Francisco fog in February. The Dead would only perform this Hunter/Garcia number a handful of times, but it would often serve as a powerful showcase of Jerry's expressive singing and guitar during solo shows in the years to come. Word to the wise — if you're looking to pick up *Reflections* on compact disc, try to find the version that appeared in the **All Good Things: Jerry Garcia Studio Sessions** ★★★★ **(RHINO, 2004)** boxed set. The essential bonus tracks include a positively joyous version of Elizabeth Cotten's "Oh Babe It Ain't No Lie" and one of the Dead's very best in-studio improvs, the 16-minute "Orpheus". A well-hidden masterpiece in the band's sprawling discography.

"The record I worked hardest at and liked best was **Cats Under the Stars** ★★★ **(ARISTA, 1978)**," Garcia once said. "That was kind of like my baby. It did worse than any other record I ever did." The 1978 release is the only studio record to be credited to the Jerry Garcia Band, and indeed, it does feel like more of a collaborative effort than a solo joint (Donna even gets lead vocal spot on the creamy "Rain"). The record opens with "Rubin and Cherise", Robert Hunter's Mardi Gras re-telling of the Orpheus myth, given a sprightly setting by Garcia's alert vocal and some almost-but-not-quite corny synth-horn stabs. "Love In The Afternoon", another Hunter/Garcia co-write, features a mellow reggae groove, Jerry suddenly assuming the slightly unconvincing role of a smooth romancer: "*Rhythm, wine, a touch of Jamaica*," he croons. "*Twilight time with a Kingston lady.*" Not sure even Bryan Ferry could pull that line off. More successful is the short-but-extremely-sweet gospel weeper "Palm Sunday", which is highlighted by Garcia and Donna's perfect harmonies. She was often ill-used in the Dead's live sets, forced to screech over the band's volume, but this performance is a reminder of how good Donna could be. *Cats Under The Stars*' title track is maybe the most ambitious track here, with some tricky rhythmic turnarounds and elaborate backup vocals. It's also the recipient of an unfortunate Hunter refrain: "*Time is a stripper, doin' it just for you!*" Garcia



Garcia is backed by John Kahn in Grass Valley, California on July 23, 1983

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES; LARRY HULST/GETTY IMAGES

Scrubs up well: solo Jerry, London, 1981

DAVID CORIO/GETTY IMAGES

makes up for this lyrical gaffe with an outstanding solo, however.

The Godchauxs left the Dead fold in early 1979 (and Keith died tragically shortly thereafter), bringing one era of the Jerry Garcia Band to an end. At first, Garcia got back together with Merl Saunders in a new group called Reconstruction, also featuring mainstay bassist John Kahn and a jazzy horn section. Alas, Garcia's Dead obligations meant that the band only lasted a few months — the only official recorded evidence of *Reconstruction* is a dreamy live take on "Dear Prudence" on **The Very Best Of Jerry Garcia** ★★★★ **(RHINO, 2006)** that builds into a powerful climax. A missed opportunity, though unofficial live tapes of the band are readily available throughout the internet, of course.

Various lineups of the Jerry Garcia Band (now featuring organist Melvin Seals) continued to gig regularly throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but Garcia's interest in documenting these groups in the studio began to wane. He made only one more solo record — **Run For The Roses** ★★★ **(ARISTA, 1982).** It's a mixed bag, overall, with some very lively moments (the catchy title track) and some sluggish points (the dull retread of the Beatles' "When I Saw Her Standing There"). The LP isn't a dud by any means, but it feels decidedly short on inspiration, perhaps owing to Garcia's ever-worsening drug addiction and health issues. In fact, the bonus tracks included on *All Good Things: Jerry Garcia Studio Sessions* might trump the genuine article, with a beautiful rendition of the folkie chestnut "Fennario" and an early run through the future Dead staple "Alabama Getaway", not to mention loving covers of two *Blood On The Tracks* numbers.

This wasn't quite the end of Garcia's extracurricular activities, though. In the early 1990s, he re-teamed with his Old & In The Way pal David Grisman for the simply titled **Jerry Garcia/David Grisman** ★★★★ **(ACOUSTIC DISC, 1991).** It's a laidback collection, to be sure, with the duo backed by the spare playing of bassist Jim Kerwin and percussionist/fiddler Joe Craven. But it's definitely worthy of discovery, especially when Garcia dips back into his folkie repertoire. "Two Soldiers", a Civil War-era ballad, gives us a chance to hear Jerry's late-period voice at its finest, ragged and world-weary, but still piercing. Bob Dylan loved it so much, he almost immediately nicked the arrangement for his 1993 solo acoustic record *World Gone Wrong*. Elsewhere, Grisman and Garcia revisit "Friend of the Devil", slowing it down and giving the mandolinist a chance to shine. Most interesting, perhaps, is the closing "Arabia", a dark-hued, 16-minute instrumental jam that suggests an unplugged "Spanish Jam", the theme that the Dead would often return to in their exploratory moments onstage. Here, Garcia and Grisman trade wicked licks over a galloping groove, clearly relishing one another's company. The pair remained close musical companions, recording a charming children's album, **Not Just For Kids** ★★★ **(ACOUSTIC DISC, 1993),** which ended up being Garcia's final studio effort released during his lifetime. As far as posthumous Garcia/Grisman albums go, don't miss **So What** ★★★ **(ACOUSTIC DISC, 1998).** Recorded at various sessions in the early 1990s, it's a fascinating jazz/bluegrass hybrid, featuring stylish takes on several warhorses from the Miles Davis songbook. Hearing the duo enthusiastically tackle the iconic title track and ably navigate the modalities of "Milestones" is a treat.

Jerry didn't have much time left, but he seems to have never lost his desire to dig in and discover new musical possibilities, right up to the very end. "Well, if I work as hard as I can in my life, I may end up being able to end up building this thing that nobody can tear down after I'm dead," Garcia once said. Mission accomplished. ●

CRITICS' VERDICT

"The tracks on *Reflections* feature either the rest of the Dead or Jerry's sometime gigging band, yet there is no attempt to even simulate a live situaton with a studio jam; everyone is kept on a tight rein, none more than Garcia himself. Consequetly, those, like me, who prefer the Dead stretching out – with the emphasis on the interplay between Weir and Garcia – are going to be disappointed... It's difficult not to conclude that the guitarist has reached a Dead end."
MICHAEL OLDFIELD, *MELODY MAKER*, APRIL 17, 1976

THE SOLO ALBUMS

BOB WEIR

RELEASED 1972 – 2016

Playing in the band, and not. Teenage cowboy dreams, evening moods and Aces in the hole – the solo travels of the Dead's founding fulcrum. *BY* JON DALE

ONE of the founding members of the Dead, Bob Weir has often felt like the understated core of the group. As a rhythm guitarist, he's a completely unique player – few have approached the instrument and its place in a band with quite the same character and inventiveness – and his songwriting has given the Dead some of their most venerable melodies, and some surprisingly sturdy vehicles for improv and extrapolation. If for some of the group – Mickey Hart, Phil Lesh – solo and extracurricular activities were a way of getting their freak on and extending the parameters of what their music could do, though, Weir has a more classicist approach. In most of his solo albums and other projects, you can hear the music that's driven him since those very early days, when his jams with Garcia transformed a promising jug band into one of the century's most important rock'n'roll groups.

Ace ★★★★ **WARNER BROS, 1972**, was Weir's first solo album, recorded during a break in Dead duties, and it's his strongest solo effort by some measure. It's perhaps most notable as the recorded home of Dead venerable "Playing In The Band"; if you're used to the pliability with which the group approach the song live, then the recording somehow manages to keep that levity and fleetfootedness while nailing down the specifics. But most all of the songs from *Ace* would end up in the Dead's set lists, and the backing band was pretty much the Dead minus Pigpen, making this a de facto Grateful Dead album, really.

It's not a perfect collection – opener "Greatest Story Ever Told" feels a little shaky on its feet; the Tex-Mex bounce of "Mexicali Blues" doesn't quite cut it, either, and it would be interesting to hear how *Ace* would have unfolded if Weir had followed co-writer John Barlow's initial vision of the song as a mellowed-out ballad. But closer "Cassidy" is one of Weir's finest moments, and a song that took on malleable form as it transmuted over to the Dead's live shows: "I always like the songs that weren't engraved in stone," drummer Bill Kreutzmann recalled in his autobiography, when discussing the song. "Those kinds of songs are my kinds of songs and some of the Weir songs from that album became like that."

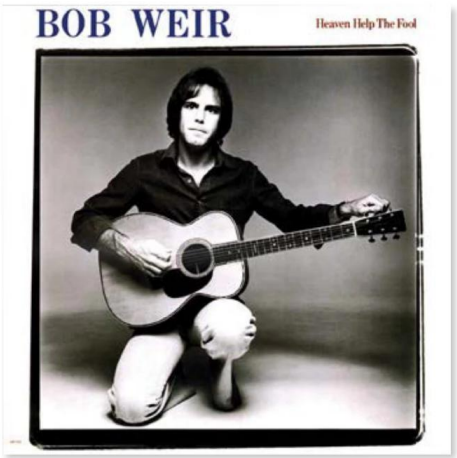
There are other gems, too, like the becalmed "Looks Like Rain", one of Weir's stateliest songs and performances and perhaps the highlight of *Ace*, and the sinuous, fluid groove of "Black-Throated Wind". For a group that struggled to capture their alchemy in the studio, on *Ace* the Dead play wonderfully; taken as it is – a superlative set of songs from an at times underestimated writer – it succeeds admirably. It seemed to fulfil a need for Weir, too, as he wouldn't return to solo recording until after the Dead's two-year hiatus – though that time was filled by his membership of the Bay Area's Kingfish.

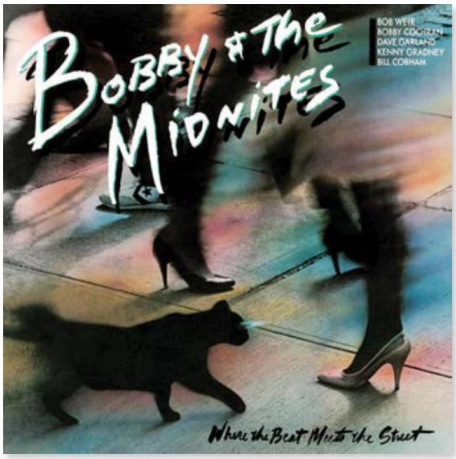
Weir (and Barlow) would contribute a few songs to the latter band's debut album, **Kingfish** ★★★ **ROUND, 1976.** They're pleasant enough, though any potential rough edges are sanded off by the group's in-the-pocket playing and the production's smoothness; indeed, some of the better moments come from other members, which makes sense enough given Kingfish was led by Matthew Kelly and Dave Torbert, the latter a member of New Riders Of The Purple Sage. It's still a stronger listen than Weir's second solo set, **Heaven Help The Fool** ★★ **ARISTA, 1978**, where he trades in the Dead as backing band and brings in members of Toto and some accompanying session players. There are a few potentially great songs on *Heaven Help The*

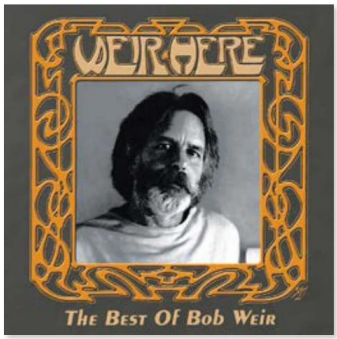
CRITICS' VERDICT

BLUE MOUNTAIN
"Joined by The National trio of Scott Devendorf and Aaron and Bryce Dessner, plus various others, Weir also flakes these ruminative songs with blues, gospel and folk, reaching a creative peak on moonlit ballad 'Gallop On The Run' and the lugubrious plea for companionship, 'Darkest Hour'."
ROB HUGHES, UNCUT, NOV 2016

THE ALBUMS







Fool, but they're stymied by some leaden playing, and the smoothed-out production does the material no favours; it's a polite country-folk-rock affair that lacks real spark.

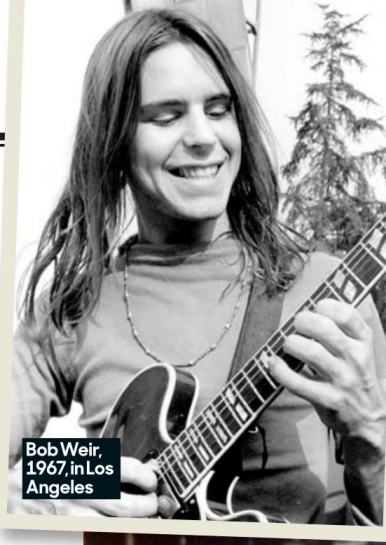
Weir's next extracurricular effort would be two albums, and a clutch of tours, with his group **Bobby & The Midnites**. The group's lineup changed a few times, but core to the collective was Bobby Cochran, who'd worked with the Flying Burrito Bros and Steppenwolf, and jazz drummer Billy Cobham; Kingfish's Matthew Kelly was in the first lineup, as was Brent Mydland, who'd go on to join the Dead. Their first album, **Bobby & The Midnites** ★★★ **ARISTA, 1981**, is surprisingly disciplined and streamlined, and while there are ill-advised moments – the cod-reggae of "Book Of Rules" key amongst them – there are also some convincingly tight rock songs, such as opener "Haze". It's certainly a stronger effort than its '84 successor, **Where The Beat Meets The Street** ★★ **COLUMBIA, 1984**, which is a flaccid collection of underwritten pop songs, Weir seemingly stepping back from his own band and letting the album develop by committee. It's best avoided.

Bobby & The Midnites broke up soon after the second album's release, and Weir would spend much of his time from here on in focused on Dead duties, though there was always a stream of extracurricular endeavour. After The Midnites folded, Weir sat in with Kingfish again, and played some solo acoustic shows; in the mid-'90s he formed RatDog, whose debut album, **Evening Moods** ★★ **GRATEFUL DEAD, 2000**, consisted mostly of originals. It's an enjoyable if slight collection of rock songs, inflected by blues and jazz but lacking a certain bite; the following year's **Live At Roseland** ★★★ **GRATEFUL DEAD, 2001** is better, consisting as it mostly does of Dead tunes, including a lovely "Friend Of The Devil", and a few moments of improvisatory splendour – they even refer back to "Dark Star" during "Ashes And Glass".

It's also worth hearing Weir's duo album with RatDog double bass player Rob Wassermann, prosaically titled **Live** ★★★ **GRATEFUL DEAD, 1998**. Most of the material dates back to 1988, and it's a delight to hear Weir and Wassermann taking on Weir's solo material in such an intimate form – the duo setting allows Weir to explore the nuances of the songs, and many of them benefit, particularly those buried under period production, like the material from *Heaven Help The Fool*. This might all feel like a bit much to navigate, but Weir's *CliffsNotes*, 2004's **Weir Here** compilation ★★★ **HYBRID, 2004**, is a good introduction, heavy on material from *Ace* but featuring some surprising selections – a Weir/Wassermann/Neil Young trio; a song from a children's album by Dan Zanes of The Del Fuegos.

But maybe the best place to start is **Blue Mountain** ★★★★★ **COLUMBIA, 2016**, Weir's most recent (and only third) solo album proper, inspired by teenage years spent on his friend Barlow's ranch. "I thought being a cowboy would be a terribly romantic thing to do," he said, "but it wasn't. I shovelled a lot of stalls. It was a bait-and-switch." He's certainly captured the romantic visions and mythology of the cowboy on the album though, and has set this down amongst a strong body of songs, produced by Weir and Josh Kaufman with a Lanois-esque ambient airiness. It's a little sentimental, sure, but then, that's always been core to Weir's writing – a nostalgic sentimentality that's in tune with life's mystic undercurrents. ●

"More Jackson Pollock than, say, Raphael..."



The Dead were "the last great American adventure", Jerry Garcia always said. Their legendary four-hour concerts encompassed rock'n'roll, jazz, blues, acid folk, musique concrète, even reggae. BOB WEIR – Garcia's protégé, Dead guitarist from '65 to '95, writer/singer of many of their keynote songs – talked David Cavanagh through six of their best albums...

ANTHEM OF THE SUN
WARNER BROS, 1968

The Dead's second album combined studio and live material in a psychedelic aural collage. The intention: to improve on an undistinguished debut, while simulating the effects of an LSD trip.

BOB WEIR: We just went nuts. Pure and simple. We were in a studio with an eight-track, and we could do anything we wanted. It wasn't a matter of carefully layering and stacking. The recording process became a bit more like Jackson Pollock than, say, Raphael. It took way, way longer to make than our first album. We were hoist with our own petard for quite a while there. It was months in the making. We recorded a whole bunch of gigs, and collaged them over the studio performances. The mixing took forever, as we had so many options.

I was 19. At that point it was starting to seem like the only life I'd ever known. I'd been at it since I was 16. That's when I met Jerry Garcia and we started working together forthwith. For a 19-year-old, I'd been around the block, musically speaking at least. I could talk theory, I could speak in Italian terms and in bop terms. That was the spoken language in those days.

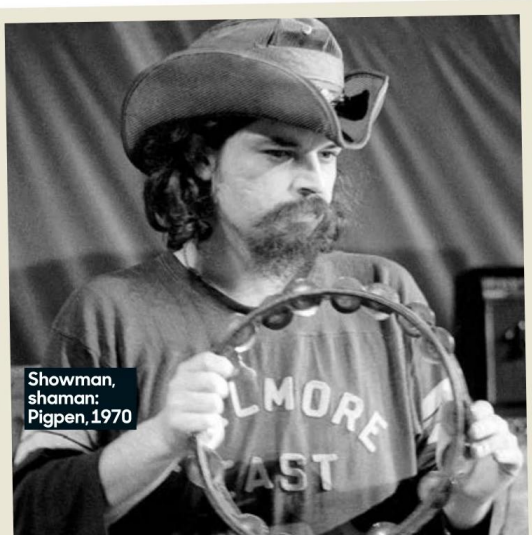
What that album lacked is that the songs didn't have that well defined a thread. We were looking more for "found art" than for preconceived stuff. Once you start clocking into the studio – night after night, for months – the endeavour gets a little too workmanlike, and the flashes of inspiration tend to become a bit more muted. We didn't do another record like that one. It's a stand-alone record, and a monument to itself.

LIVE/DEAD
WARNER BROS, 1970

On this celebrated double album, the Grateful Dead marked out their territory. Highlights included the 23-minute "Dark Star", the self-explanatory "Feedback", and Pigpen's R&B showboating.

That record, of course, happened a lot faster than *Anthem Of The Sun*. There was no overdubbing. We only recorded one or two runs [*of the proposed tracklisting*], one at the Avalon Ballroom and one at the Carousel. Then we just listened to everything fairly carefully and decided which tracks to include. You can't really hear the audience, but they're there.

The *Live/Dead* set was basically a condensation of our live show. Our shows were only an hour and a half, maybe approaching two hours. Come to think of it, no, they were four hours – that's



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT ALTMAN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The Dead in their '60s heyday, Potrero Hill, San Francisco

because we were stretching songs out. "Dark Star" was wonderfully representative of that day. It was a real apt rendition, but as we became more skilled on our instruments, we were able to take that song to new places. It's a matter of spirit: how much does the music move you?

Pigpen was our showman. He was pretty damn good, but he had a congenital liver disease and he lost his strength as the years went on. The alcohol didn't help. At first, Pigpen led the charge and the rest of us were more or less his sidemen. As his strength began to ebb, the rest of us started stepping up. But we kept his niche cosy for him, because we knew it wasn't going to be long. [*Pigpen, real name Ron McKernan, died in 1973.*]

WORKINGMAN'S DEAD

WARNER BROS, 1970

Back to nature. The Dead relocate from San Francisco to Marin County, saddle up their ponies and deliver a country-rock classic.

After the Summer Of Love, and the summer after that, the city had become somewhat uninhabitable for us. The Haight-Ashbury had degenerated. There were a lot of bad drugs going around, and a lot of people being wasted by them. So we all moved out to the County.

I'd worked on ranches as a kid, and enjoyed going back to that lifestyle. I was living on a self-inflicted dustbowl, raising horses, trying to be a farmer and musician. It stretched me pretty thin, but there was a lot of that country aesthetic in our musical roots.

There was this cultural divide between rednecks – who were pro-America, love it or leave it – and people who were against the Vietnam War. The whole getting-back-to-the-country decision was partly a gesture to meet the rednecks halfway. "OK, we'll try your way of life. We'll respect, and even revere, your musical heritage. We'll try to get real good at it." And it worked for a while, too. America felt pretty "whole" when we got out of Vietnam, and it had a lot to do with the melding of popular music and country music idioms.

Robert Hunter wrote lyrics for *Workingman's Dead*. He could use fewer words, and say more, than anyone. *"Are you kind?"* [*on "Uncle John's Band"*] was, I assumed, a sci-fi allusion. *"Kind"* meaning "my kind", "humankind." In the context of *Workingman's Dead*, it meant: "Are you simpático... in solidarity with other working men?"

EUROPE '72

WARNER BROS, 1972

The Dead commemorate their 1972 European tour with a triple live album (!) containing old favourites, inspirational ensemble playing, and stunning new songs, including Weir/Hunter's timeless "Jack Straw".

We always had a huge crew and organisation. It worked to our advantage for the most part – everyone felt a spirit of community, and felt wonderful going to work.

But that more or less insinuated that when we went to Europe in '72, the whole entourage had to come with us. It became a great big gallivant through Europe with maybe 40 people on two buses. It was important for you to go to your bus when they did the headcounts every day, so ➤

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES;

"Songs are living critters": (l–r) Pigpen, Garcia, Weir, Kreutzmann and Lesh at the Tivoli Concert Hall, Copenhagen, April 1972

that you were accounted for. We were tourists on our days off, but most of the time we had a job to do. We'd pull into a town and do a soundcheck, then take it easy and marshal resources for the show. So we didn't get out too much. But we had fun, and the audiences were highly receptive.

A lot of those songs were never studio-recorded. "Jack Straw" I still sing today with my band RatDog. I don't watch much TV, but one night I was home, it was late and an old version of Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men* came on. I was mesmerised. We were coming out of the *Workingman's Dead* phase, and Hunter had this lyric. I grabbed it and we came up with a little sketch of heartland Americana, a ballad about two ne'er-do-wells. It was patterned on *Of Mice And Men*, but we tried to put a twist or two on it. Same story, different context.

TERRAPIN STATION

ARISTA, 1977

Using Fleetwood Mac's producer, Keith Olsen, the Dead move into AOR ballads, slick fusion textures and bombastic orchestrations on the side-long title track. A true curio in the canon – and one that polarises opinion among Deadheads about whether it rocks or sucks.

We were done recording and ready to mix. And Keith Olsen said, "No, wait a minute." And he got on a plane, flew to London and rented an orchestra. This was a time when the dollar was strong, and you could rent the LSO real cheap. People in the US music scene were doing this left, right and centre. We had an orchestra and a choir on that album. When the producer played it to us, we were of mixed feelings, but we were locked into a deadline by then, so it got released like that.

What the fans would rather have heard was us playing those tunes on the first side – "Samson And Delilah", "Dancin' In The Streets" – you know, cowboy-simple. But when you're making a studio record, you kind of owe it to yourself to experiment. Sometimes cowboy-simple is great. But sometimes, y'know, if there's an orchestra there... I got along with Keith Olsen fine. I admired his acuity, his acumen. And there were good songs and they were well recorded. It sold relatively well. We were always semi-realistic that we weren't going to be as mainstream as Fleetwood Mac, as our subject matter and approach were nowhere near as prosaic. It would have had the unmistakable shallow ring of falsehood if we were to try to do that.

IN THE DARK

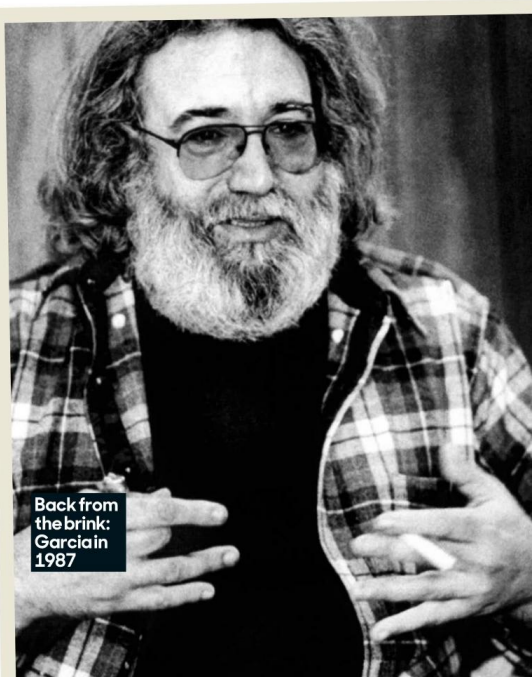
ARISTA, 1987

After a long break from studios, during which Jerry Garcia had serious drug problems, the Dead returned with a strong, often emotional album – and a surprise MTV-backed Top 10 US hit with "Touch Of Grey".

We'd had our ups and downs. Jerry had been in a coma. But we were still playing concerts. Our attendance had increased by 20 or 25 per cent, and we were making good money. We weren't all that enthused about going into the studio. Y'know, you could go in and make a polished record, but you'd have to work with a producer and the finished effect wasn't real fulfilling.

But we had a notion that *In The Dark* was sounding good. We'd been playing a lot of those songs for five or six years. They were mature, ready to go, whereas on most of our other studio records the songs were relatively new. With *In The Dark*, we knew those songs, we weren't just discovering them. Songs are living critters. They have an infancy, a childhood, they get rambunctious and then they hit a mature phase. So it wasn't that eye-popping a concept when the album did well.

By the '90s, we were creeping inexorably towards a situation where there were more of us dead than alive. Pigpen, Keith [*Godchaux*], Brent [*Mydland*], then Jerry. But still, to this day, there's a language that we speak that nobody else can fully comprehend. And we might even get around to mounting another tour in the future.



Back from the brink: Garcia in 1987

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS; BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

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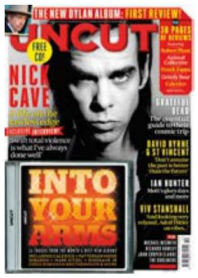
Heavy! How to find your way through Dick's Picks, Dave's Picks, Road Trips and official/unofficial channels? Jon Dale is your Captain Trips advisor, cruising the Deadhead dark web to bring you his Pick of the Picks: along the way identifying key tapers, savage "Alligator"s and the ultimate "Dark Star".

UNCUT OCTOBER 2012



AS transformations go, it's particularly astonishing – a mid '60s jug band slowly morphing, thanks to their ravenous aesthetic and chemical appetite, into a cornerstone of the American counterculture, inspiring a legion of titular fanatics to travel the length and breadth of the country (sometimes beyond) to capture every last drop of their peculiar musical sorcery. So it is with the Grateful Dead, the combustible relationship formed between ex-Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions members Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir and Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, other founding members Bill Kreutzmann and Phil Lesh, and 1967 initiate Mickey Hart. Across three decades, they would turn traditional folk and blues on its head, dosing it with psychedelics, electricity and improvisation, going stratospheric with the volume, and turning into one of the great live music attractions of the twentieth century.

So great, in fact, that across their three-or-so decades, the Grateful Dead have become probably the most bootlegged/taped group in history, thanks to the legion of Deadheads that started an intricate hierarchy of tape traders and fanatics. They've released numerous live albums, both contemporaneously and retrospectively, employing archivists to look after their own recordings of performances, and starting a number of live recordings series: *Road Trips*, *Dave's Picks*, and the legendary 36 volumes of *Dick's Picks*. There's upwards of 100 sanctioned live Dead albums and downloads out there alone, which makes the terrain tough to navigate. To help you on your way, and only a little late for would have been Garcia's 78th birthday, on August 1, here's a clutch of sanctified audio from one of America's most idiosyncratic and self-determining collectives.

ROAD TRIPS VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2

Recorded: mostly Feb 14, 1968, Carousel Ballroom, San Francisco, CA; extra material from Tour Of The Great Pacific Northwest, Jan–Feb 1968

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, MAR 2009

The Dead signed with Warner Bros in 1966 after making their name in the same San Fran ferment as Quicksilver Messenger Service and Jefferson Airplane, soundtracking Kesey's acid trips and turning on the community from their communal home at 710 Ashbury. But if their first album is a curate's egg, not hinting at their music's expansive properties, by 1968 they were hitting their stride. Parts of *Road Trips Volume 2 Number 2* are nasty, with Garcia's guitar particularly tart on "Morning Dew". It's a great chance to catch the Grateful Dead at a tipping point. They would eventually lean on the Carousel "Alligator" for the version on 1968's *Anthem Of The Sun*, a sign of the

Tie-dye another day: mics at the ready during a Dead show at Berkeley's Greek Theatre, 1987

strength of both this show (where they played alongside Country Joe & The Fish) and the performances from their preceding Tour Of The Great Pacific Northwest with Quicksilver.

TWO FROM THE VAULT

Recorded: Aug 24, 1968, Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles, CA

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, MAY 1992

This is a mindboggling set, the Dead getting to grips with the vectors of time-space disruption opened by their run through "Dark Star", "St Stephen" and "The Eleven", despite both the disarray in which the group found itself – Pigpen and Weir were close to fired in mid-'68 – and the group's disappointment with the wildly experimental *Anthem From The Sun*, released in July. Yet somehow they're still playing with the furious joy that characterises the Dead at their best, following Cowboy Neal on the road, into the new terrain of post-Beat Americana.

LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST 2-11-69

Recorded: Feb 11, 1969, Fillmore East, New York, NY

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, OCT 1997

On February 11, 1969, the Grateful Dead played two one-hour sets in support of Janis Joplin, who was stepping out from Big Brother & The Holding Company. The constraint served them well, and their recently expanded line-up – Tom "TC" Constanten had joined the group on keyboards in late 1968 – didn't mean they couldn't tighten the screws. These two discs do everything you want from a Grateful Dead show: some gorgeous songs, including a lovely "Mountains Of The Moon" with Garcia at his most tenderly wasted, a knock-out "The Other One" and "Cryptical Envelopment", and an exemplary run through the classic "Dark Star", "St Stephen" and "The Eleven" trilogy, stretched out into space with a short "Drums" section, before slipping into "Caution (Do Not Stop On Tracks)".

DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 10

Recorded: Dec 12, 1969, Thelma, Los Angeles, CA

RHINO, MAY 2014

There's something enjoyably rough and rugged about this set from Los Angeles, where the Dead are working out the contours and subtleties of the songs that they'd go on to record, soon after, for their legendary *Workingman's Dead* album. They play almost the entire album, and there are some lovely performances of classics like "China Cat Sunflower" and "I Know You Rider". Pigpen's very present on this recording, which is great to hear – at other times he'd slip into the background a little, a surprise for such a singular character. If you're a fan of the Dead's more extended, ➤

PHILIP GOULD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

improvisatory explorations, there's a nice chunk of "Alligator"/"Drums"/"Feedback" towards the end, but the real meat is actually in the limited extra disc, featuring material from the previous night – a 20-minute "Dark Star"; an elliptical freefall through "That's It For The Other One".

DICK'S PICKS VOLUME 4

Recorded: Feb 13–14, 1970, Fillmore East, New York, NY

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, FEB 1996

Early 1970 brought all kinds of fortune and misfortune to the Dead. They were riding the success of *Live/Dead*, with *Workingman's Dead* newly in the can; Constanten left the group the night of their first show of the year in New Orleans, January 30; the following night, they were busted by the New Orleans Police Department Narcotics Squad. Despite all the madness, they were playing with incredible grace and fluidity. If their improvisations often walk a tightrope, here they stretch "Dark Star", "That's It For The Other One" and "Lovelight" out to half an hour each, at ease with the furthest reaches of the songs, teasing with hints of melody and great waves of side-slippage, notes spilling from six strings like mercury from a cracked thermometer.

THREE FROM THE VAULT

Recorded: Feb 19, 1971, Capitol Theater, Port Chester, NY

RHINO, JUN 2007

With *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty* under their belts, the Dead were riding high as interpreters of American country and blues. But change is a constant, and February 19, 1971 is auspicious – it was their first gig since Mickey Hart vacated his drum stool, embarrassed by his manager father Lenny's embezzling of over $150,000 from the group's coffers. Kreutzmann now flies alone, reining in some of the Dead's abstraction. From the opening "Truckin'" they're playing breezily, as if unshackled from the heavy focus of extended improvisation. They were also introducing new songs into their armoury, drilling into the heart of "Wharf Rat" as though they've been on it their entire life.

ROAD TRIPS VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

Recorded: Jul 31, 1971, Yale Bowl, New Haven, CT; Aug 23, 1971, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, IL

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, JUL 2008

The Dead started to lay back on the touring commitments in '71, though they still managed to play final stands at the Fillmore East and West, and burn through two nights at Winterland. On this Road Trip, an exemplary collection of their '71 form, Garcia's vocals are unbearably touching, a real weariness in his lonely sigh as he sings "Cryptical Envelopment". If you're going to get deep inside the Dead, you need to catch these shows where they're not 100 per cent certain of where they're headed. Even the unsuccessful improvisations are worth it, where the group hit a wall and then slowly find their way back on track.

DICK'S PICKS VOLUME 2

Recorded: Oct 31, 1971, Ohio Theatre, Columbus, OH

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, MAR 1995

This is the only single-disc Dick's Pick, and it's highly idiosyncratic, opening with a meandering "Dark Star/Jam". Indeed, this Columbus show from late 1971 seems eerily sedate, offering yet another portal into the Dead's music. "St Stephen" has never sounded quite so drowsy, its eyelids drooping in slow motion. No doubt their shifting line-up had something to do with it, with recent inductee Keith Godchaux filling in for a hospitalised Pigpen. Or maybe it was Garcia's retreat, with partner Mountain Girl, to Sans Souci.

DICK'S ROAD TRIPS VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2

Recorded: Nov 15, 1971, Austin Municipal Auditorium, Austin, TX

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, FEB 2010

In 1971, the Dead were seemingly at a crossroads, figuring out what direction they were headed in. Godchaux was still working his way into the heart of the music, with the group searching for that delicate balance between traditional song and free time. This gives their late '71 shows a particularly questing quality, with this show from Texas a particularly slippery beast. It starts with some great, rollicking versions of band hymn "Truckin'", "Bertha" and "Playing With The Band" before spiralling into a loose-limbed weave between "Dark Star" and "El Paso", where the group dissolve the core elements of these most classic Dead songs.

TWO FROM THE VAULT

THE INTREPID ARCHIVISTS WHO KEPT THE DEAD ALIVE

DICK LATVALA

The first and most important of the Dead archivists, Latvala came through the SF scene after studying psychology; moving to Hawaii in 1974, he worked as a zookeeper. Both he and his ex-wife, Carol, ended up working for the Dead, with Dick moving into the archives after spending some time doing menial tasks for the group. His most significant contribution was definitely the Dick's Picks series of live releases, which he shepherded into being and maintained until his passing on August 6, 1999.

DAVID LEMIEUX

Lemieux would pick up the torch from Latvala and oversee Dick's Picks until the series reached its 36th volume, after which he worked on the Road Trips volumes before overseeing Dave's Picks (why not Dave's Faves?). Lemieux has a Master's in film archiving (from the University of East Anglia) and balances his time between being legacy manager for the Dead and ongoing research in film; he also hosts a daily radio show on SiriusXM's Grateful Dead Channel.

STEPPIN' OUT WITH THE GRATEFUL DEAD: ENGLAND '72

Recorded: tour of England, Apr–May 1972

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, JUL 2002

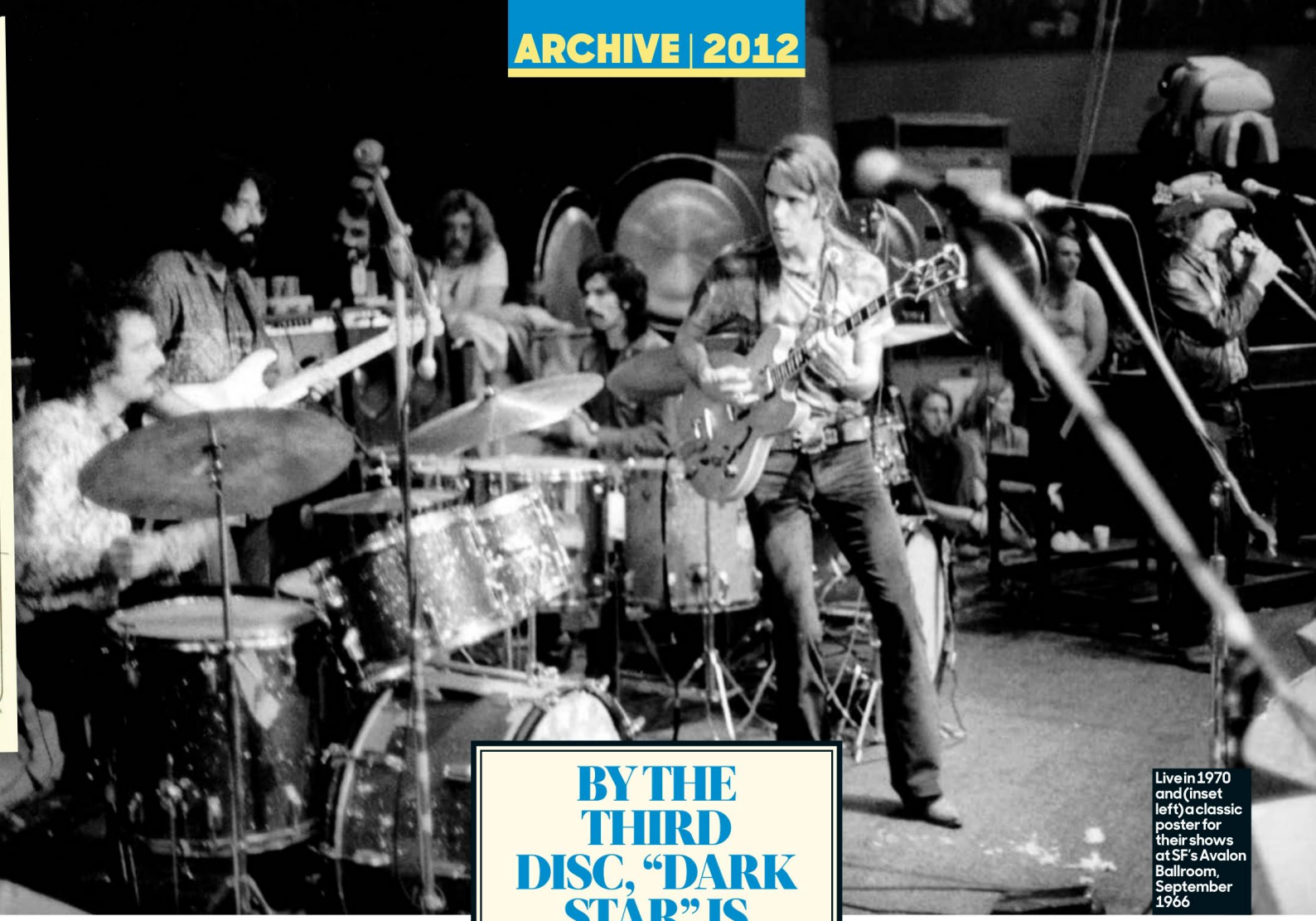
This four-disc boxset, drawn from seven shows on their 1972 tour of England, is a welcome supplement to *Europe '72*. It's notable for rarely documented covers like Huey Smith's "Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu", but the highlights this time are some of the Dead's most affecting songs. "Jack Straw", from the Strand Lyceum, is beautifully poised, "Black Peter" is a dream, and the Empire Pool's "Wharf Rat", a song I'd happily chase through its countless permutations, seems possessed of an uncommon grace, the group laying back on the beat, drifting in and out of the song like inhaling and exhaling.

HUNDRED YEAR HALL

Recorded: Apr 26, 1972, Jahrhunderthalle, Frankfurt, West Germany

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, SEP 1995

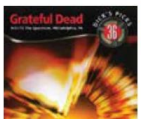
Europe '72 might be the best-known of the Dead's live sets from this most productive year, but there's no denying *Hundred Year Hall* is the one, even if on this tour the Dead had a particularly contested relationship with Germany. (Crew member Jim Furman described the group as "the All-American Kid in Europe... a little spastic about relating to people.") This set includes a startling 36-minute "The Other One", lingering on



Live in 1970 and (inset left) a classic poster for their shows at SF's Avalon Ballroom, September 1966

BY THE THIRD DISC, "DARK STAR" IS PIROUETTING OUT INTO THE AIR

the "Cryptical Envelopment" riff before diving, vertiginously, into Weir's opening line at about 14 minutes. From there, things keep cresting and receding, with the Dead riding wild energy as they spontaneously deconstruct one of their most lasting and emblematic songs.



DICK'S PICKS VOLUME 36

Recorded: Sep 21, 1972, The Spectrum, Philadelphia, PA

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, OCT 2005

The final Dick's Pick, but what a way to go out – this 1972 Philadelphia show, here in its entirety, is one of the Dead's most staggering live feats, almost an equal to the powers of Volume 4. It's all about the breadth of the performances – one disc of standards, a second disc where they start to stretch their limbs with a gloriously easy "He's Gone", but by the third disc, "Dark Star" is pirouetting out into the air, one of their most jaw-dropping, knife's-edge, alchemical performances of the song. A very worthy indulgence.

DICK'S PICKS VOLUME 12

Recorded: Jun 26, 1974, Providence Civic Center, Providence, RI; Jun 28, 1974, Boston Garden, Boston, MA

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, OCT 1998

After the one-two punch of *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, the Dead tried to master the studio again across 1973 and '74 with *Wake Of The Flood* and *From The Mars Hotel*. Neither album is fully satisfying, but it feels like they were occupied by other, far heavier matters, not least the passing of founding member Pigpen in March 1973, or the firing of tour manager Sam Cutler, who had pushed the group to new heights but had never fully grasped their anarchic essence. But if they couldn't pull off great studio albums, they were playing some of their riskiest shows, such as these gems from 1974, breathing life into songs that had been stunted by the recording process, notably a beautiful "Eyes Of The World", and stringing together some of their most intimately immense, sea-faring improvisations, for example on "Other One Jam" and "Spanish Jam", or the gorgeous improv that morphs out of the third disc's "Weather Report Suite". There's also Lesh's electronic collaboration with Ned Lagin, a five-minute extrapolation of their cosmic synth album *Seastones*, dropped in the midst of one of the most fulfilling Picks. This one broadcasts from some of the Dead's furthest outposts.

DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 2

Recorded: Jul 31, 1974, Dillon Stadium, Hartford, CT

RHINO, MAY 2012

Though they slip into a couple of extended jams on this recently released documentation of their Dillon Stadium show, for the most part *Dave's Picks Volume 2* focuses on the Dead's mastery of song. Garcia steps out with one of his best ballads, "It Must Have Been The Roses", while "Eyes Of The World" has a real lightness of touch. Only days later, though, their Roosevelt Stadium show would end up both a washout and a riot, Weir hit by a projectile from the audience when he explained why the group couldn't play. It seems like the Dead were always in flux, fortune's coin flipping at will. Soon they'd go into retreat, taking time off from the touring treadmill, before hitting the stage again in 1976, getting primed to usher in another year of staggering concerts, though they had been thrown by the death of roadie/road manager and soul brother Rex Jackson. And Mickey Hart had returned to the lineup, meaning the double-percussion armoury was back.

DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 1

Recorded: May 25, 1977, The Mosque, Richmond, VA

RHINO, FEB 2012

Their 1977 run of shows is held in high esteem by Deadheads, with good reason: this is the last time the Dead would be so consistently on for an extended period. (Though maybe simply Garcia was trying to escape the money-swallowing exercise that was *The Grateful Dead Movie*, which chewed through three years and over half a million dollars.) This recently released triple set, the first in a new series of live recordings inaugurated by current archivist David Lemieux, has plenty of ➤

ROBERT ALTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

HOW DEADHEADS COLONISED THE INTERNET ARCHIVE

ONCE you've done the marathon with the Dick's and Dave's Picks and the Road Trips, where else to go but archive.org, the online home for Dead tape traders? Deadheads were early adopters of the potential of the internet to share their love for all things Grateful Dead, and the Internet Archive – a free public-access digital library, whose openness seems to reflect the sharing ethos and networked communities of the Dead's tape-trading fanbase – is loaded with fantastic Dead performances for all to access. Indeed, there's a ridiculous amount of material available to stream or download, whether soundboard or audience recordings, and some judicious hunting can turn up real gems. Here are five to start with:

May 2, 1970, Harpur College, Binghamton, NY

Released officially as *Dick's Picks Volume 8*, this is an excellent show, with an intimate "Friend Of The Devil" and a tight spiral through "St. Stephen"/"Cryptical Envelopment" and beyond. The Internet Archive is great for checking out these officially released shows before buying the sometimes-rare, oft-expensive Picks sets.

August 27, 1972, Old Renaissance Faire Grounds, Veneta, OR

The beautiful *Sunshine Daydream* set, which eventually landed on disc in 2013. The show was a benefit for the Springfield Creamery, hosted by the Merry Pranksters; it's an important one also for the film that was made, a great opportunity to see the Dead in full flight, and one that circulated on cruddy nth-generation VHS tapes before the archivists finally released a DVD.

December 6, 1973, Cleveland Public Hall, Cleveland, OH

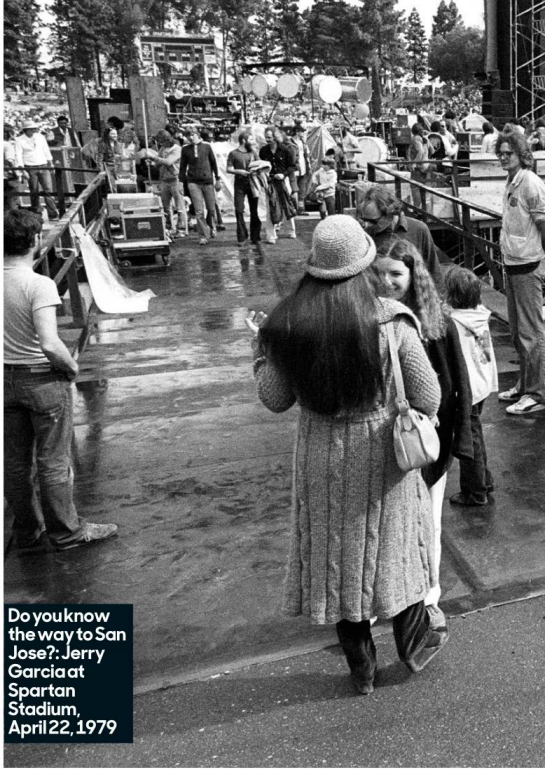
If you're lucky you might have picked up some of this as the extra disc with *Road Trips Vol 4 No 3*, but the full set has never been officially released, and hearing a show like this – the Dead on startling form, a near-45-minute "Dark Star" one of the greatest performances of the song – is a treat indeed. Smartly, "Dark Star" made it onto the bonus disc, but it's even more extraordinary in the context of the full show; you can really hear the Dead building to its peak.

May 8, 1977, Barton Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

This performance was finally released officially by the Dead in 2017, but it feels wrong, somehow, to listen to it "via official channels", such is the legend that's accrued to this show, one of the first tapes to circulate widely. It's no surprise it's now included in the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress.

March 16, 1990, Capital Centre, Landover, Maryland

This surfaced eventually on the *Spring 1990* 18-disc boxset, but for those who aren't quite so dedicated to Dead collecting, it's well worth a listen via archive.org, given it's one of the best sets from an era that's sometimes overlooked. But in 1990, the Dead were playing keenly, raring to go, and there are some truly great moments here – "Scarlet Begonias", "Sugar Magnolia", the trip through "Jam" to "The Other One".



Do you know the way to San Jose?: Jerry Garcia at Spartan Stadium, April 22, 1979

moments, the very pinnacle of which is a 30-minute pass through an extremely electric "The Other One", where Garcia spools out some of his most pointillistic playing, into a broken-backed, hard-hearted "Wharf Rat".

DICK'S PICKS VOLUME 15

Recorded: Sep 3, 1977, Raceway Park, Englishtown, NJ

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, OCT 1999

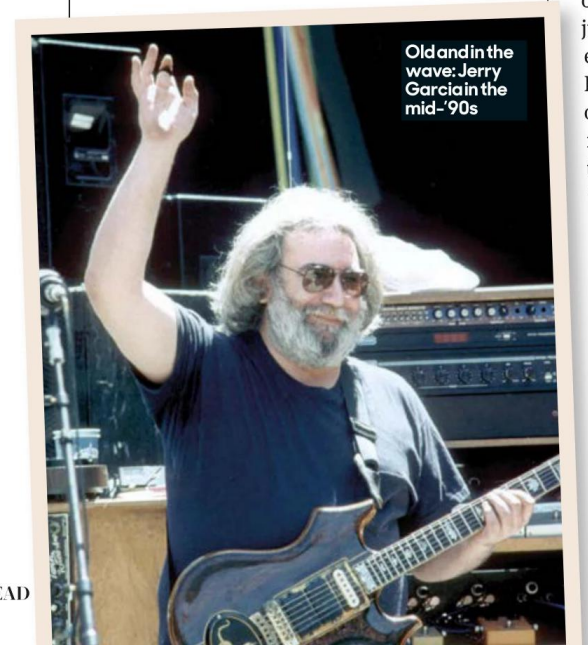
Just because American music critic Richard Meltzer dug it, doesn't mean he was right: 1977's *Terrapin Station* was one of the Grateful Dead's weakest studio sets. However this Pick, their first show after the release of *Terrapin*, is a real standout. They take some interesting liberties with the likes of "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodeloo" and "Not Fade Away", the latter of which stretches out its introduction to a near-eternity, with the group orbiting one chord as if their lives depended on it. Much like Dylan, they're given to mutating old material, and here "Friend Of The Devil" is taken at a leisurely pace, the better to show off Donna's voice at its most gorgeous.

DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 23

Recorded: Jan 22, 1978, McArthur Court, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

RHINO, AUGUST 2017

One nice thing about the Dave's Picks series is its focus on perhaps lesser-known, or lesser-celebrated, moments in the Dead's career. The group were capable of playing with fire and grace well into the 1980s, sometimes even beyond; here, in 1978, there's a simply stellar second set that starts to take off with "Terrapin Station" and just continues to ascend, through a glorious "The Other One", a spiral into "Space" and then off into one of the most lovingly liquid renditions of "St Stephen" heard in many a moon. It's no surprise this show is held in particularly high regard by Dead tapers and obsessives; their telepathy seemed to be particularly heightened at McArthur Court.



Old and in the wave: Jerry Garcia in the mid-'90s

DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 15

Recorded: April 22, 1978, Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

RHINO, AUGUST 2015

This one's a load of fun. As David Lemieux points out in his liner notes, this run of April '78 shows has the Dead at a point of transformation, loosening the reins and beginning to really let things hang out again. There's a lovely, homely "It Must Have Been The Roses" that's a gorgeous showcase for the Dead at their most reflective, but a good portion of this set has the group in energetic mode, really building from each other's contributions and giving everything just the right amount of rough-around-the-edges unpredictability. "New Minglewood Blues" feels tightly wound, but with plenty of space for playfulness; the passage from a ribald drums duo into "Not Fade Away" and then onwards, through "Wharf Rat" and "Sugar Magnolia", is an absolute pleasure.

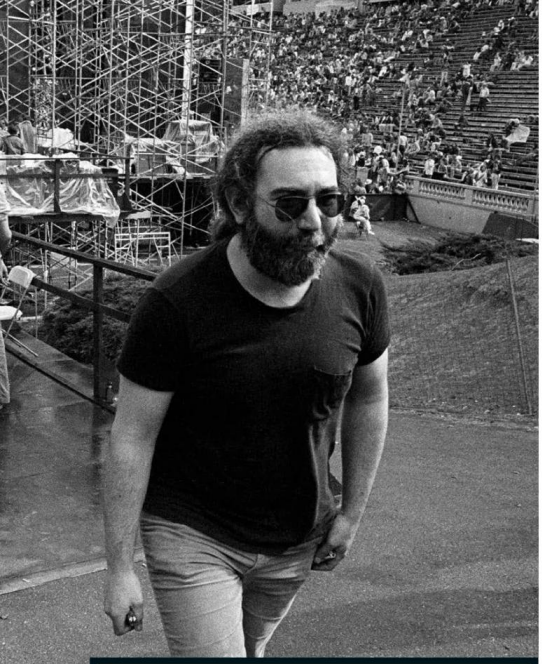
DAVE'S PICKS VOLUME 8

Recorded: November 30, 1980, Fox Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia

RHINO, NOVEMBER 2013

Dave's Picks Volume 8 is interesting for a number of reasons. The first of the Picks to feature new member Brent Mydland, it's also a matrix recording, which means it synchronises audience and soundboard

ED PERLSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES; LARRY HULST/GETTY IMAGES



30 TRIPS IS A GOOD WAY TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY; TO NAVIGATE THE BAND'S HISTORY

recordings, which gives the set greater heft and mood. It also has a legendary transition from "Scarlet Begonias" into "Fire On The Mountain" – one of their best performances of these songs, and one that proved the group were still capable of summoning magic as they moved into one of their relatively fallow periods. An excellent rendition of "Deal", too.

FALLOUT FROM THE PHIL ZONE

Recorded: 1967–1995

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, JUN 1997

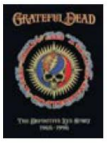
The Phil Zone is the space in front of bass player Lesh's amp stack, where Deadheads would congregate to have their bowels evacuated by the sonic boom of Lesh's bass vibrations. *Fallout* is a great primer for the various eras of Dead live action, throwing in some unexpected glories, like 1995's cover of Dylan's "Visions Of Johanna", among some typically smoking early '70s takes on "New Speedway Boogie" and Otis Redding's "Hard To Handle". It's nice to hear an '89 rendition of *American Beauty* opener "Box Of Rain" too, one of the Dead's best songs and surprisingly absent from their regular repertoire. Pulled mostly from Owsley "Bear" Stanley's live archives, this is a good place to start if you're after an overview.

SO MANY ROADS (1965–1995)

Recorded: 1965–1995

GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, NOV 1999

Another collection that pulls together material from each phase of the group's career, though most notable for some cuts from 1966 that reveal how the group's heart was inflamed by garage rock – songs like "Cream Puff War", from the Fillmore Auditorium in July '66, are mainlining bursts of distortion and energy. Thrilling stuff. The rest of the five discs trace a neat arc through the group's three decades, with a couple of nice "Dark Star"s, the odd studio outtake, from *Workingman's Dead*, *American Beauty* and *Built To Last*, and even a couple of sessions from 1965 (which would subsequently turn up on the *Birth Of The Dead* collection). It's not all great, but it does a good job of mapping the Dead's years.



30 TRIPS AROUND THE SUN: THE DEFINITIVE LIVE STORY 1965–1995

Recorded: 1965–1995

RHINO, OCTOBER 2015

30 Trips Around The Sun turned up in two versions: a mammoth 80-CD boxset covering the Dead's history, or a 4-CD compilation that cherry-picks key performances from each live recording represented on the larger box. They're both worthwhile, but the 4-CD manifestation is a really good way of getting your hands dirty with the full span of the Dead's live career. Of necessity, it lacks some of the more exploratory and experimental sides of the group's music – no *Seastones* here – but it's a great opportunity to navigate their history, and find portals of entry for deeper exploration.

GRAYFOLDED

Recorded: 1968–1993

SWELL/ARTIFACTS, 1996

One of the great ironies of live Dead is that the ultimate example of their onstage magic was stitched together from hundreds of constituent parts by a Canadian composer best known for taking Burroughsian cut-up methodology into the next dimension. John Oswald coined the word 'plunderphonics', thus both claiming the rights to the intellectual field of audio quotation and doing the on-ground research for mash-ups. He also made some deliciously intricate compositions from other people's music, the pinnacle of which is the two-disc *Grayfolded*, which condenses several decades of "Dark Star" into one breathtaking, two-hour piece. It's a brilliant dolly-out and pan across the Dead live.

The idea came from the Dead's resident avantist, Phil Lesh, who (along with conspirator David Gans) originally asked Oswald to create a miniaturist 'plunderphonics' intro for their Dead-headed radio show. Oswald took things in the other direction. "I began at the beginning [and] worked linearly to the end," he explains, "so the process was like a slow-motion version of the process of improvisatory discovery that the Dead themselves applied to the song." Diving through Latvala's archives, Oswald tripped through Dead time: "The entire search and extraction took about a month, 9 to 5, Monday to Friday." The end result is the ultimate trip, with the Dead's signature improvisatory tune spun way out into space, though surprisingly, it doesn't capture everyone's ear: "I think some Deadheads think it's sacrilegious".

MORE PICKS FROM DICK

THE Dick's Picks series started in 1993 with a fantastic set from December 1973. Pulling together complete and near-complete shows on multiple disc sets, it's the ultimate testament to the dedication of the group's then-archivist, Dick Latvala, a heroic figure who saw the series through its first 14 releases before passing away in 1999. His successor David Lemieux picked up the thread on *Dick's Picks Volume 17*, one of the better performances from the '90s. Your best bet with the Picks is to figure out the era of the Dead you're fondest of and then explore accordingly, though you risk missing out on anomalous gems, like *Dick's Picks Volume 13*, from the Nassau Coliseum in May 1981, with a wild improvisation that runs through both "Caution Jam" and "Spanish Jam", the latter making a welcome return to the setlist. Also worth checking out: *Dick's Picks Volume 23*, a September 1972 show from Baltimore, with a monstrous near-40-minute "The Other One".

TAPE TRADERS

MEET THE DEAD'S "OFFICIAL" CONCERT BOOTLEGGERS

THE Dead encouraged their audience to tape their shows and trade them through various Deadhead networks. Indeed, the Dead formalised the practice in 1984 when they introduced the Taper's Section for audience members dedicated to capturing the music. Who were the best tapers?

BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON

The earliest "taper", though Cantor-Jackson was part of the Dead's inner circle – she was trained in electronics and had done a live sound apprenticeship with Bob Matthews of the Fillmore West. She recorded many 1970s performances, the tapes of which would become known as the "Betty Boards". She also ended up taping for Chris Robinson Brotherhood during the 2010s.

DOUG AND JIM OADE

The Oade brothers worked together, running a retail store out of Thomasville, Georgia. They were obsessive Dead fans who went to great lengths to get the best recordings they could: "It was often a group effort with 80 to 90 pounds of PCM gear," Doug once said, "two pretty large boxes that comprise the recorders, the tapes, the microphones, cables."

JERRY MOORE

Moore started recording the Dead in 1973 and was known for his creative approach to recording – an early story has him fashioning a mic stand out of a golf-ball retriever. His closet of Dead tapes was justly legendary, such that a number of tape traders named themselves MooresBoys when they helped him to document and archive the closet of tapes.

GRATEFUL DEAD

COMPILATIONS

RELEASED 1974 - 2019

How to package a musical universe? Mammoth boxes and era overviews do their best to face the challenge of compiling the uncompilable. BY PETER WATTS

IN 1973, the Grateful Dead left Warners and started their own label, something that prompted Warner Bros to release the band's first compilation. Many more would follow **Skeletons From The Closet** ★★★★ WARNER BROS, 1974, which plucked eight studio and two live tracks from six of the Dead's nine Warners albums, supplemented unexpectedly by the Dead-backed "Mexicali Blue" from Weir's *Ace*. To its credit, the label took some care about getting things right, commissioning excellent cover art and zeroing in on the 1969/1970 era with three tracks from *American Beauty*, two apiece from *Workingman's Dead* and *Aoxomoxoa* and a live version of "Turn On Your Love Light" from January '69. As comps go, it is still a good place to start. Deadheads complained that there wasn't a whole lot of live material, but for casual fans that wasn't such a bad thing and it was the band's best-selling release to date.

A few years later, the Dead moved labels again – this time to Arista – and Warners took that as a signal that it was time to release another compilation, the double LP **What A Long Strange Trip It's Been** ★★★★ WARNER BROS, 1977, which had a cover by Rick Griffin and took a broader view of the band's history. Alongside some well-chosen studio tracks, there were nine live songs from *Live/Dead*, *Europe '72*, *Skull & Roses* and *Bear's Choice* plus both sides of the "Dark Star" single, making these available on an album for the first time. Once again, the psych/trippy/improv side of the band was treated as something best kept hidden from new fans – which perhaps explains why the album again sold well, going platinum.

It was another two decades before the Dead next featured on a compilation, this time one with a self-explanatory title: **The Arista Years** ★★ ARISTA, 1996. This had 26 tracks taken from *Terrapin Station* to *Without A Net* and while it's a pretty good guide to those eight albums and, as a CD release, made some sense at the time, it's now a rather pointless artefact. The lack of a career-length comp was finally rectified by **The Very Best Of Grateful Dead** ★★★ RHINO, 2003, which distilled the band's career to a single disc. It's non-chronological, and tracks like "Black Peter" and "Dark Star" don't make the cut. Of the 17 selections, seven are drawn from *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, which means it largely meets the ludicrous challenge of condensing such a diverse band on a single CD.

The complementary **Birth Of The Dead** ★★★★ RHINO, 2003 featured studio recordings and live tracks made before the release of the band's first album. This double CD had debuted as a part of the *Golden Road* box but was deemed important enough to get a standalone release. Similar fare could be found on **Rare Cuts And Oddities 1966** ★★★★ GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 2005, which was reissued by Rhino in 2013.

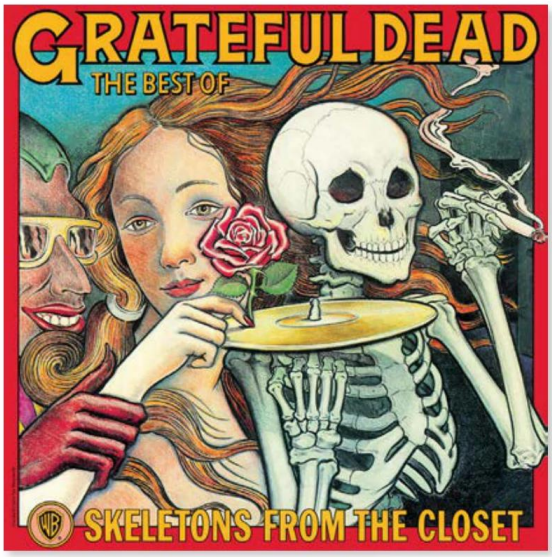
Passing over the 2011 budget *Flashback With The Grateful Dead* brings us to **The Best Of The Grateful Dead** ★★★★ RHINO, 2015, an impressive, chronological two-disc comp that takes at least one track from every studio album, plus "Dark Star". There are no live tracks, these being kept for sister album **The Best Of The Grateful Dead Live** ★★★★ RHINO, 2018, which draws on a variety of live sources to present a pleasingly chronological tour through the Dead's myriad live worlds. As a pair, they are perfect for the more-than-casual/less-than-obsessive Dead fan.

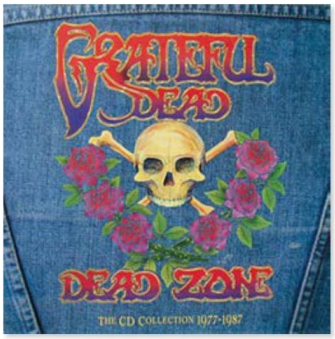
Between these came the so-so soundtrack album to Dead documentary **Long Strange Trip** ★★★★ RHINO, 2017, which

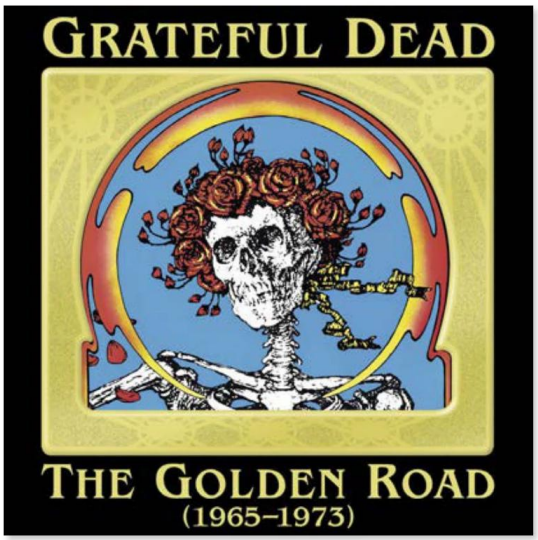
CRITICS' VERDICT

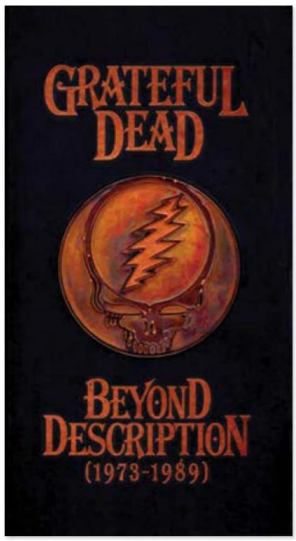
"The weird thing about [*Skeletons In The Closet*] is that most of it doesn't sound very good. Even though it covers the period between their very first album... right up to *Europe '72*, it all seems a trifle dull... Sadly, the music that you hear when you're wrecked often doesn't work when you're straight. And when you've stripped away all that Charles Reich *Signpost To New Space* crambola and rammed *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* back into your bookshelf, the Dead don't seem to have much substance left."
CHARLES SHAAR MURRAY, NME, APRIL 6, 1974

THE ALBUMS









has some great music but a rather scattershot approach. Fans will like it for the many unreleased tracks, and there's an even longer three-CD version available only via Amazon. Finally, **Sage & Spirit** ★★ **RHINO, 2019** was a limited-edition vinyl album of 10 tracks recorded between 1970 and 1980. It came out for Record Store Day in collaboration with a brewery, and sadly not a producer of medicinal marijuana. It's a nice artefact but serves no real purpose.

In their 50-year odyssey, the Dead have released slightly more than their fair share of boxsets. These started with **Dead Zone: The Grateful Dead CD Collection (1977–1987)** ★★ **ARISTA, 1987**, a now fairly pointless box of six CDs released on Arista between 1977 and 1987 aimed at the new compact disc market. There's no additional material, and like many early CD transfers, the sound is pretty poor. The first more substantial offering came in the form of **So Many Roads (1965–1995)** ★★★★ **RHINO, 1999**, a five-disc trawl through the archives that produced a stack of (almost entirely) unreleased studio and live recordings starting with sessions from San Francisco in 1965 and unashamedly concentrating on the sort of free-style jams that separate the Deadheads from dilettantes.

Next came **The Golden Road (1965–1973)** ★★★★★ **RHINO, 2001**, a 12-disc box containing remastered reissues of all the Warners studio and live albums (including *Bear's Choice*), plus the early material that was later issued as *The Birth Of The Dead*. Almost all of the original albums were supplemented by strong additional material, making this an excellent canonical guide to the band's first decade, with enough bits and bobs to satisfy the heads. The rest of the story was then told in a similar fashion on **Beyond Description (1973–1989)** ★★★★ **RHINO, 2005**, another 12-disc set that featured every album from *Wake Of The Flood* to *Built To Last* (but chose to omit the two live albums *Steal Your Face* and *Without A Net*). Again, there were numerous outtakes and rare live cuts for each album, including entire discs of additional material for *Reckoning* and *Dead Set*.

Finally, **30 Trips Around The Sun** ★★★★ **RHINO, 2015** was a gargantuan 80 (yes, that's eight-zero) CD boxset that delivered 30 complete Dead shows, one a year from 1966 to 1995. It's a beautiful and extraordinary package for superfans. If 74 hours' worth of music seems a little over-the-top, there's a more manageable – but still pretty hefty – four-disc "sampler" version, which took a single track from each show. ●

miscellany

The GRATEFUL DEAD solo discographies, finest screen moments and contemporary singles. Plus collectables, from vinyl and posters to backstage passes

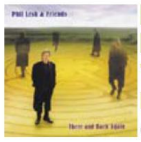
THE OTHER ONES

Albums from Lesh, Kreutzmann and (especially) Hart...

THE OTHER ONES
The Strange Remain
ARISTA, 1999
Recorded on the Furthur Festival tour in 1998, the post-Garcia Dead's only album release honoured Jerry's spirit over two-and-a-half hours of majestic reinvention.
HEAR: The closing 13-minute medley of "China Cat Sunflower" and "I Know You Rider".

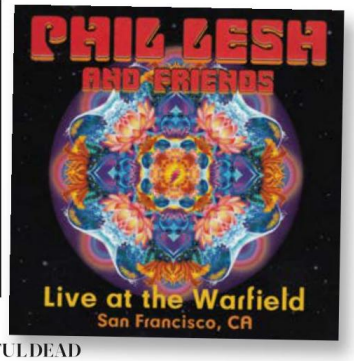
PHIL LESH

PHIL LESH AND FRIENDS
Love Will See You Through
GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 1999
Lesh, fresh from liver transplant surgery, and mates including Hot Tuna's Jorma Kaukonen and Pete Sears and Kingfish's Steve Kimock, recorded what became known as *Highlights Volume One* in 1999, combining jam reinventions of Dead standards with cuts from Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna.
HEAR: The bluesy take on "Big Boss Man", covered by Grateful Dead way back in '66.



PHIL LESH AND FRIENDS
There And Back Again
COLUMBIA, 2002
Lesh's revolving band of friends (here, Warren Hayes, Jimmy Herring, Rob Barraco and John Molo) cohered for long enough to record a Dead-meets-Allmans style studio album reflecting on the deaths of Garcia and Gov't Mule's Allen Woody, with Hunter providing additional, typically allusive lyrics.
HEAR: Hayes' rich country contribution "The Real Thing".

PHIL LESH AND FRIENDS
Live At The Warfield
IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT, 2006
Joan Osborne, John Scofield, Larry Campbell and Greg Osby were in Lesh's gang for this San Francisco barnstormer, featuring such rich Dead-and-beyond pickings that the 2CD album had an entirely different track listing from the DVD.
HEAR: Osborne's R&B interpretation of "Shakedown Street".



BILL KREUTZMANN

BACKBONE
Backbone
GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 1999
The only album from Bill Kreutzmann's trio with guitarist Rick Barnett and bassist Edd Cook, who concocted R&B blues jams and revisited "New Speedway Boogie".
HEAR: The Hendrix-indebted "Fly Away".

TRICHROMES
The Trichromes
33RD STREET RECORDS, 2002
Kreutzmann's next band, featuring guitarist Ralph Woodson, bassist Mike DiPirro and singer Sy Klopps and guests including Pete Sears, led out on a pop foot, but were also adept at classic rock, folk blues and the odd intergalactic Dead jam.
HEAR: "Dice With The Universe", the lead track from their debut EP.

7 WALKERS
7 Walkers **RESPONSE, 2010**
For which Kreutzmann hooked up with Austin's funk godfather Papa Mali for a "swampadelic" fusion of psych and voodoo funk.
HEAR: To hear "New Orleans Crawl" is to saunter cockily down Bourbon St half full of hooch.

MICKEY HART

MICKEY HART
Rolling Thunder
WARNER BROS, 1972
On a break from the Dead, Hart released his debut solo album, a trippy pop-rock affair named after a Shoshone shaman and featuring Bay area regulars and classical tabla players Allah Rakha and Zakir Hussain.
HEAR: "The Main Ten" – with Stephen Stills on bass – which the Dead would work up into "Playing In The Band".

DIGA RHYTHM BAND
Diga
ROUND RECORDS, 1976
The sole album from Hart's collaboration with the renamed Tal Vadya Rhythm Band delivered five tracks at the cutting edge of globe-trotting percussion.
HEAR: "Happiness Is Drumming", the root of "Fire On The Mountain".

RHYTHM DEVILS
The Apocalypse Now Sessions
PASSPORT, 1980
Recorded for the soundtrack to Francis Ford Coppola's Vietnam classic, improvised along to a screening of the film and infused with a dark jungle heartbeat.
HEAR: "The Beast", showcasing the bass drum array built for this album and eventually incorporated into "Drums".

AIRTO/ MICKEY HART/ FLORA PURIM
Däfos
REFERENCE RECORDINGS, 1983
Conceived as a soundtrack album to the titular imaginary planet, *Däfos* furthered Hart's immersion in

GETTY IMAGES/BETTMANN

ethno-musicology with ambient backdrops to workouts on the bow-like berimbau, tubular bells and Indonesian saron.
HEAR: "Psychopomp", a tonal ambient piece that would drift into "Space".

MICKEY HART/HENRY WOLFF/NANCY HENNINGS
Yamantaka
CELESTIAL HARMONIES, 1983
Named after the Tibetan lord of death, Hart's collaboration with New Age pioneers Wolff and Hennings was Tibetan bowl music at its most sinister.
HEAR: Of the two tracks, "The Revolving Mask Of Yamantaka" is the more unsettling.

MICKEY HART
Music To Be Born By
RYKODISC, 1989
Aimed at the untapped foetus market, Hart's ambient 1989 opus, consisting of three notes repeating around the sound of the unborn child's heartbeat, is perfect for chilling out in utero.
HEAR: The 70-minute "Music To Be Born By" – it's the only track.

MICKEY HART
At The Edge RYKODISC, 1990
Hart set about "romancing the drum" on his electronically treated first album with the percussion ensemble soon to be dubbed Planet Drum.
HEAR: Deadheads should head for "The Eliminators", featuring subtle work from Garcia.

MICKEY HART
Planet Drum RYKODISC, 1991
The recipient of the first World Music Album Grammy, *Planet Drum* brought together players from India, Brazil, Nigeria and Puerto Rico for an intriguing, spontaneous culture-mash.
HEAR: "Temple Caves", an ominous tomb raider.

MICKEY HART
Mickey Hart's Mystery Box
RYKODISC, 1996
Returning to pop-rock for the first time since *Rolling Thunder*, Hart teamed up with a capella sextet The Mint Juleps to fuse his world percussions with soulful harmonies.
HEAR: "Down The Road", on which Hart takes lead vocals for an impassioned tribute to Garcia.

MICKEY HART
Supralingua RYKODISC, 1998
Translation: "beyond words". A continuation of the textured polyrhythmic groove-making of *Planet Drum*, with phonetic vocals from Gladys Céspedes, Jesus Diaz, Rebeca Mauleón, Raz Kennedy, Joey Blake and Alan Kushan and "universe of sound" courtesy of state-of-the-art computer workstation RAMU (Random Access Musical Universe).
HEAR: "Angola", which builds on Hart's collaborations with Gyoto Monks to darkly funky effect.

MICKEY HART
Spirit Into Sound
GRATEFUL DEAD RECORDS, 1999
A more meditative affair, with many tracks designed as aural equivalents of quotes from the likes of Salman Rushdie, Bob Dylan, Stravinsky and Woodrow Wilson that were collected in the accompanying book *Spirit Into Sound: The Magic Of Music*.
HEAR: The light-after-forest-storm "Native Sun"

MICKEY HART/ZAKIR HUSSAIN/SIKIRU ADEPOJU/GIOVANNI HIDALGO
Global Drum Project
SHOUT! FACTORY, 2007
Technology their new frontier, the four percussionists centre-grounded the RAMU to sample and manipulate rhythms into a digitally enhanced, ambient trance sister-piece to *Diga* and *Supralingua*.
HEAR: The haunting "Under One Groove" invents a new genre: global goth.

MICKEY HART BAND
Mysterium Tremendum
360° PRODUCTIONS, 2012
What next but to jam with the sun? Computerising "cosmic sounds" from NASA-derived light waves and electromagnetic radiation given off by celestial bodies, the MHB improvised along with "the billion-year-old orchestra of planetary motion". Talk about further...
HEAR: Astro-funky "Starlight Starbright".

MICKEY HART BAND
Superorganism
360° PRODUCTIONS, 2013
From outer to inner space. Here Hart converted EEG impulses from his own brain waves into sound, to which his players jammed. Mental! Literally.
Hear: The synthetic dopamine buzzing of "Mind Your Head" will make you wonder if Hart's a cyborg.

MICKEY HART
RAMU
VERVE FORECAST, 2017
Containing some of Hart's most adventurous journeys into the aural galaxies within RAMU; taking in bulbous beats, sodden jazz and space Portishead.
Hear: "Big Bad Wolf", where ambient jazz meets future rap in the 1920s.
MARK BEAUMONT

FOR DEADHEADS ONLY!
A quick guide to Grateful Dead collectables
RECORD COLLECTORS PRIZE CONDITION. DEAD FANS PRIZE THE MUSIC.

If you're looking to build a killer collection of Grateful Dead vinyl, you'll find plenty of items out there. But typically – and quite rightly – these records will have been *much loved* already. When it comes to value, there's significant disparity between slightly scruffy copies and near-pristine versions, which don't turn up too often.

Examples: a decent-ish first UK pressing of AOXOMOXOA may set you back £40 – but you can triple that for the best copies. The same theme plays across UK issues of ANTHEM OF THE SUN (typical price range: £30–£120), LIVE/DEAD (£20–£100) or WORKINGMAN'S DEAD (£12–£40). Even a record-shop staple like *Steal Your Face* (with bonus *For Dead Heads Only*) can be valued £60+, but only in as-new order.

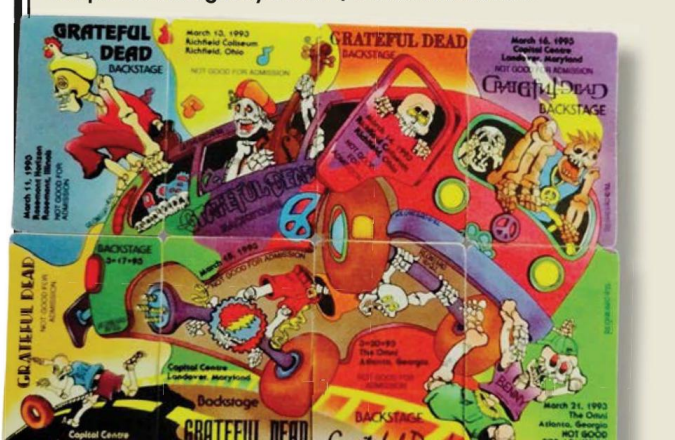
The Dead didn't release many 7"s, and the rarest are collector catnip. A beautiful Japanese copy of "CHINA CAT SUNFLOWER" made £637 in early 2020, and you'll need to find $1,000+ for the '68 Japanese red-vinyl issue of "DARK STAR".

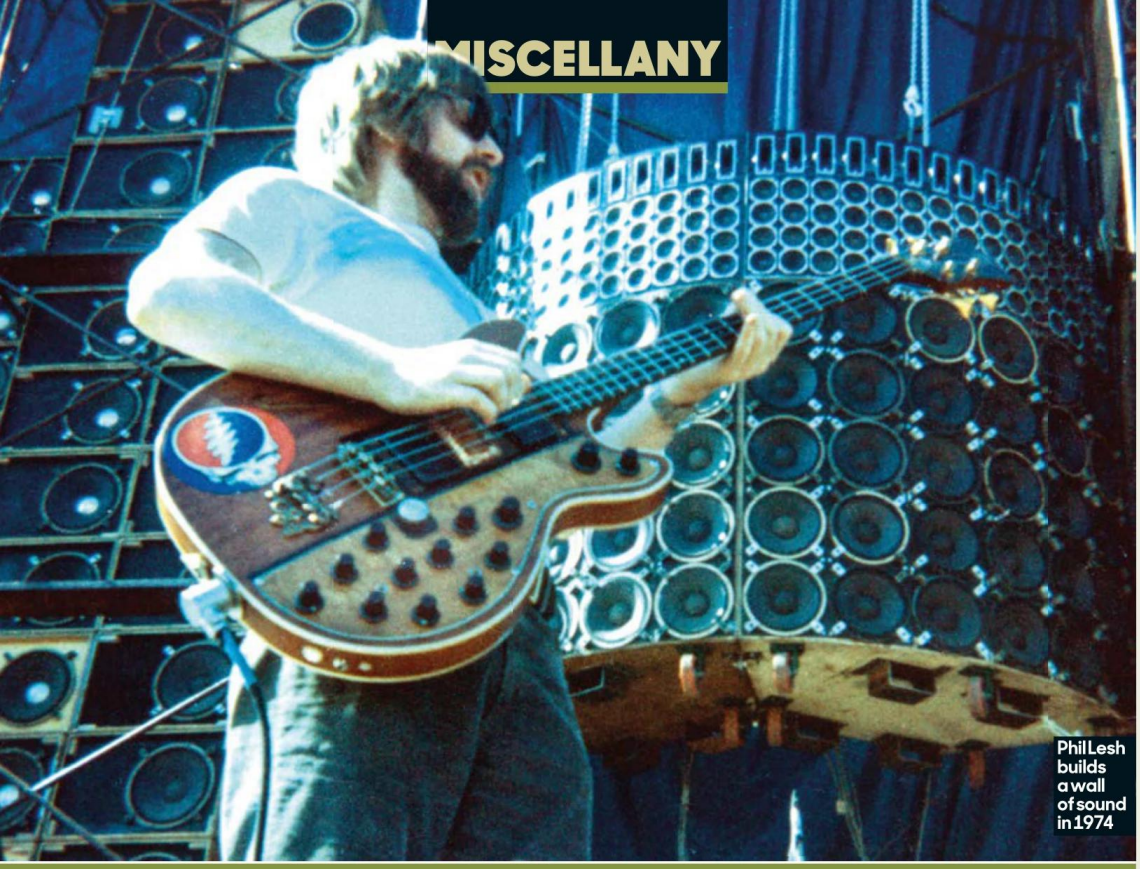
The big one, though, is the withdrawn debut US single, "STEALIN'"/"DON'T EASE ME IN". Released in 1966 on the Scorpio label, fewer than 250 were pressed. One unplayed copy is offered online at time of writing for $5,000 – "A total time machine deal," apparently. Dead singles have their own following, which is why Rhino released a limited-edition selection in 2017. Today, they're £20+ each, ballpark.

Normally, we'd be good boys and gloss over the bootleg scene. That said, Discogs aggregates more 'unofficial' releases (595) than official ones (364), and you cannot deny that boots are a big part of the Dead experience. The band themselves were at peace with that, kinda. As Mickey Hart has said: "[Preventing fans recording shows] became a real hassle... We decided we didn't want to be cops." Some pressings retain supreme cachet, and up to $2,000 price tags. You're directed to HOLLYWOOD PALLADIUM 1 and SAN FRANCISCO 1 – in one seller's words, "pieces of history".

Here's where the phenomenal DICK'S PICK series comes in, but they are costly, too. A complete, still-sealed set of 1–6 on limited-edition vinyl sold for $1,000 in 2019. Keep an eye on VOL 4, FILLMORE EAST, 1970. This 6LP box was released in 2013 and now changes hands for £250. It's not just vinyl, either: Rhino's monster 73CD set EUROPE '72: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS (2011) is valued at just under a grand.

Inevitably, there's a big collector scene for concert ephemera. Used ticket stubs can be scored for a few quid each. Authentic handbills and posters start below $100, but hit crazy highs: one superb 1973 poster, for a show at Duke University, sold for $11,400 in 2020. The later period has some cheaper gems. The '92 tour featured different backstage passes that combined to make unique 'puzzle art', and the complete set of eight is yours for $400. *MARK BENTLEY*





Phil Lesh builds a wall of sound in 1974

"There's nothing like a Grateful Dead concert"

As America's poor struggle to feed themselves during lockdown, the **Grateful Dead** have unlocked some of their audio-visual archive in the hope of raising money for the Feeding America Covid-19 fund. Among the items on offer: the legendary **The Grateful Dead Movie** – the visual component of their *Steal Your Face* album, and a record of their "pre-retirement" shows at **Winterland**, **October 1974**. So what happens? And what are some other essential Dead screen scrolls?

0-7 MIN The legendarily expensive animated sequence. The *Allah* violinist plays, we enter the Mars Hotel. A game of cosmic pinball is played as roses float around in space.

3 MIN Oh no! The pinball machine smashes, freeing the Grateful Dead "Uncle Sam" bones, which dance to "US Blues".

5 MIN Uncle Sam continues his trippy journey by motorcycle. To judge by the visuals, he may well have taken LSD. Or perhaps I have.

6 MIN 30 Uncle Sam is in jail, with his bony identical brothers. It's OK though – while a cop sleeps, he's busted out by the Statue Of Liberty.

8 MIN We're now at the Winterland show, where people are dancing uninhibitedly to "US Blues". Jerry Garcia looks lean and well. Phil Lesh has an exceptionally neat beard.

11 MIN Unlike most rock films, this will clearly be about the band and the crowd as a community. The dancing. The grinning. The guy in dungarees who knows all the words, with whom the camera is much taken.

12 MIN "One More Saturday Night" – an Elton John-style rocker with some lovely interplay between Garcia and Weir. More alarming is the homemade, pre-health and safety pyro effects. It seems to be roadie Steve Parish, situated stage left with a cigarette lighter and a can of accelerant. The song is interspersed with alarming balls of flame.

15 MIN Donna Jean Godchaux arrives to bring some class to the singing.

16 MIN Slightly weird moment when Bill Graham introduces the road crew on the stage. Full of larks out of the public eye, Ram Rod, Rex Jackson and others seem a bit cowed in its glare. People didn't say "awks" in 1977, but this is what we say now.

19 MIN The trucks are on the road, and the load-in begins. Has any speaker system been so demoralisingly expensive and unwieldy and yet get such lingering long shots? The crew make to drop the odd heavy load on Bill Graham, but in fact don't.

23 MIN Woody Guthrie's "Going Down The Road Feeling Bad" concludes. Keith Godchaux seems very baffled by his close-up.

24 MIN Back at load-in, where Jerry tunes up and Phil plugs into an oscilloscope.

26 MIN A Hells Angel wheels his bike into the hall, and someone – an expert in counterculture diplomacy – tries to explain that they're not welcome, because they might set off violent reactions in other people. "If Bill Graham thinks I'm violent," says the biker, "I'll knock him out and leave."

27 MIN Betty Cantor explains to a cameraman that she does indeed handle live sound but has also produced and engineered Grateful Dead albums. She is breast-feeding her child as she does so.

28 MIN Phil explains his bass situation and encourages the camera to help him create some feedback.

29 MIN "Truckin'" prompts a groovy dancing outbreak.

32 MIN We join the line outside. Beer bongs are consumed. We see more Hells Angels arrive.

36 MIN The crowd enter and begin whooping at an empty stage. Audience interviews are conducted. "Wherever the Dead are, man, you'll see the people."

37 MIN A guy gives Bill Kreutzmann a "Dead" California licence plate, which he puts on his bass drum.

38 MIN "Eyes Of The World". Unstable pyro bursts punctuate lovely showers of soloing from Garcia. Little kids are dancing on stage – well away from the pyro, you'll be relieved to learn.

45 MIN A trip backstage: into catering where Betty is hanging out with her child. And to the board where the show is being taped.

46 MIN "Say something intelligent," a cameraman asks a guy at the bar. OK then. "Bottom line of the whole scene is this. There is nothing like a Grateful Dead concert." Pretty close.

50 MIN Dissent! "This fucking film, man... making cash off of everybody..." A concert attendee thinks he's being ripped off. Will he get royalties when the film is shown?

52 MIN "Sugar Magnolia". Amiable dancing continues.

60 MIN It is morning, and it is time for reminiscence. We meet a kid who remembers the old days.

64 MIN We meet a wise concert attendee who says that the band

A different drum: stills from *The Grateful Dead Movie*

ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES, OGERRESSMEYER/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

reflect "Heavy generational changes." There is a montage of images from Haight-Ashbury-Japan-Europe '72.

66 MIN Intermission!

67 MIN "Playing In The Band" starts.

73 MIN Jerry interview, in which he reflects that live tapes are a mixed blessing. He gets angry sometimes. "There's no relationship between the way I feel and what went down," he says.

84 MIN Bill in action. Some deep jazz chops in play while Garcia plays something exquisite. Blimey, this is still "Playing In The Band".

85 MIN A guy named Jeff Levy blags his way inside on pretext of being a chef and knowing Bob Weir in some implausible fashion. "Congratulations," someone says.

87 MIN "Stella Blue". Focus is solely on Jerry as he delivers a killer version. At the close, a child gives him some flowers, which about covers it.

95 MIN The guy at the concession stand says he prefers Sha Na Na. This is too loud. A hot dog is 60 cents and "Apple cider" is 35c.

101 MIN Slightly crazy scenes. Nitrous oxide is being consumed as "Home On The Range" is sung. Er, what is happening, please?

103 MIN We're back on stage and someone has discovered how to solarise film in this section. All a bit *Song Remains The Same*, as we will say a couple of years in the future.

110 MIN "Morning Dew".

123 MIN "Morning Dew" ends. Devastating scenes. Can we recover?

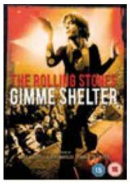
123 MIN Backstage. Has a band ever looked more confused and disorientated when not playing music? This may well be the point. Cake is consumed. "One more time?"

127 MIN "Johnny B Goode". Mickey Hart appears to play the drums as a very rickety-looking illuminated sign descends.

129 MIN A crutch is waved in the air. The implication perhaps is that we have been healed and made to walk. Which isn't too far from the truth. *JOHN ROBINSON*

Wait until that reel come round

More choice Dead on film



GIMME SHELTER

MAYSLES BROTHERS, 1970

"That's the story here? Bummer..." Garcia nails the tone of the Altamont concert in his fleeting kaftan-sporting appearance in the Stones film. "Hells Angels beating on musicians? That doesn't seem right," says Phil Lesh, evenly.

LONG STRANGE TRIP

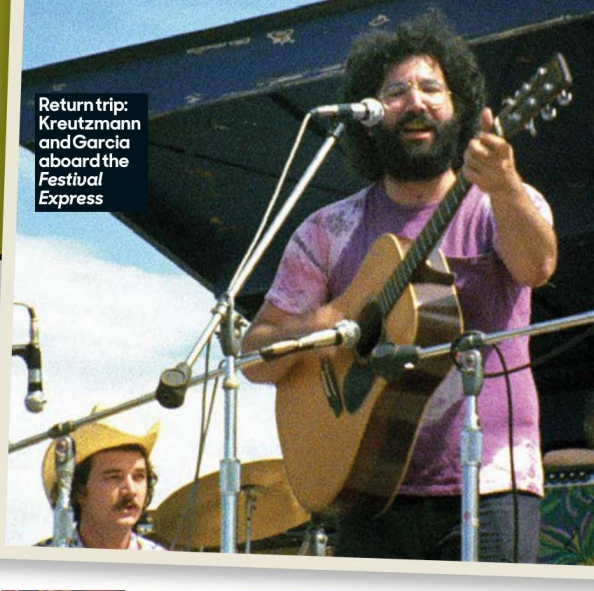
AMIR BAR-LEV, 2017

Six-part Amazon doc does a Scorsese quality job on resurrecting the Dead's tale from unseen or rarely seen footage. Great talking heads, none better than former Stones road manager Sam Cutler, the man who wised the Dead up to money.

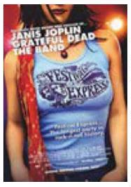
THE OTHER ONE

MIKE FLEISS, 2015

The Netflix Weir doc. "Beautiful Bob surrounded by the ugly brothers..." is how one contributor to this flick states Bob's role as the Dead's hottie. Bob was there for the music, though. "I was there when he got there," he says of his role supporting Jerry with rhythm guitar. "With a little surprise..."



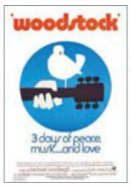
Return trip: Kreutzmann and Garcia aboard the *Festival Express*



FESTIVAL EXPRESS

BOB SMEATON, 2003

Footage from 1970 train tour emerges 33 years later. The Dead play some fine *Workingman's Dead* material. There is great on-train jamming. At one show, Jerry emerges as the only force capable of directing the crowd and helping them avoid beatings by security.



WOODSTOCK: THE MOVIE

MICHAEL WADLEIGH, 1970

No live music. But Jerry speaks for everyone from backstage when he says, "It's really amazing. A Biblical, epical, unbelievable scene..." *JR*

(DARK) STARS ON 45

The Dead's contemporary singles

DON'T EASE ME IN/STEALIN'
SCORPIO, 1966. US -; UK -

THE GOLDEN ROAD/ CREAM PUFF WAR
WARNER BROS, 1967. US; UK

VIOLA LEE BLUES PT 1/ VIOLA LEE BLUES PT 2
WARNER BROS, 1967/JAPAN ONLY
US; UK

DARK STAR/ BORN CROSS-EYED
WARNER BROS, 1968. US; UK

CHINA CAT SUNFLOWER/ ST STEPHEN
WARNER BROS, 1969. US; UK

UNCLE JOHN'S BAND/ NEW SPEEDWAY BOOGIE
WARNER BROS, 1970. US 69; UK

TRUCKIN'/ RIPPLE
WARNER BROS, 1970. US 64; UK

ONE MORE SATURDAY NIGHT/ BERTHA WARNER BROS, 1972.
US; UK

TRUCKIN'/ JOHNNY B GOODE
WARNER BROS, 1972
US; UK

SUGAR MAGNOLIA/ MR CHARLIE WARNER BROS, 1973. US 91; UK

LET ME SING YOUR BLUES AWAY/ HERE COMES SUNSHINE
GRATEFUL DEAD, 1973. US; UK

EYES OF THE WORLD/ WEATHER REPORT SUITE PT 1
GRATEFUL DEAD, 1973. US; UK

US BLUES/LOOSE LUCY
GRATEFUL DEAD, 1974. US; UK

THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED/ HELP ON THE WAY
GRATEFUL DEAD, 1975. US 81; UK

FRANKLIN'S TOWER/ HELP ON THE WAY
GRATEFUL DEAD, 1975. US; UK

DANCIN' IN THE STREETS/

TERRAPIN STATION
ARISTA, 1977. US; UK

GOOD LOVIN'/ STAGGER LEE
ARISTA, 1978. US; UK

SHAKEDOWN STREET/ FRANCE
ARISTA, 1979. US; UK

ALABAMA GATEWAY/ FAR FROM ME
ARISTA, 1980. US 68; UK

DON'T EASE ME IN/ FAR FROM ME
ARISTA, 1980. US; UK

TOUCH OF GREY/ MY BROTHER ESAU
ARISTA, 1987. US 9; UK

HELL IN A BUCKET/ WEST LA FADEAWAY
ARISTA, 1987. US; UK

THROWING STONES/ WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE
ARISTA, 1987. US; UK

AF ARCHIVE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"Bett-ar" on the Dead's sound decks in Santa Barbara, CA, June 1978

STOP ME
If you've heard this one before

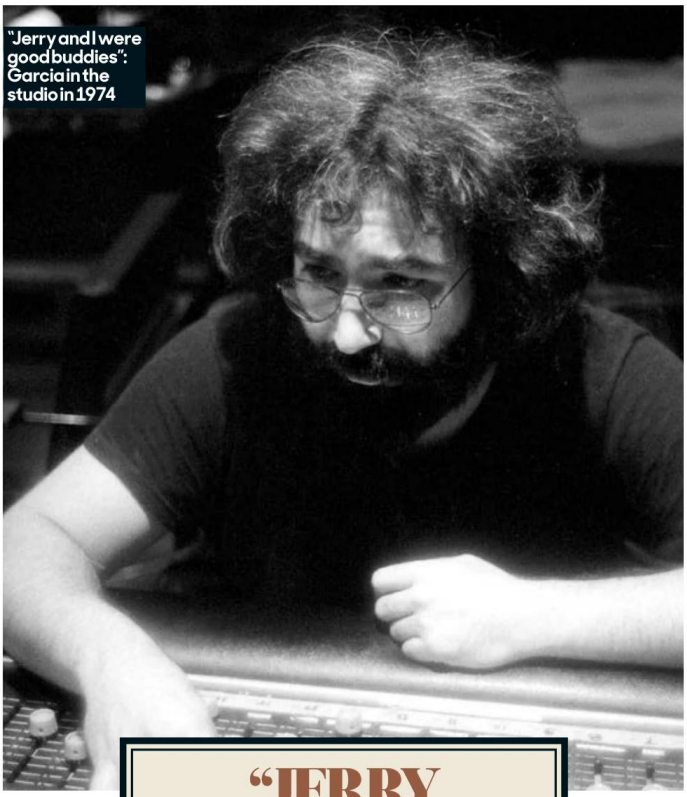
Pioneering sound engineer BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON recalls her induction to the Dead's world. "The better the band plays, the better my sound..."

I STARTED researching hallucinogens in high school, and wrote a term paper on it. I went to San Francisco to find out more about it. When I had my first LSD experience I ended up at the Grateful Dead's house at 710 Ashbury. Cosmic – I just ended up there. Bobby just opened the door and said, "Come in." That was the first time I met Jerry and Rock Scully and Bobby. I was just somebody coming through. I got high with a friend in Golden Gate Park and he knew Rock Scully's brother – Rock was the manager at the time – and we went over to their house. Jerry always thought it was cosmic. It was a small world at that point.

Once that scene got publicity it got commercial and a lot of people arrived who didn't understand it. It was a way of thinking – and music was an expression of that with the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore. I went there as often as I could. I was a free agent, as my father was dead and so I had a lot more liberty... I had spent a lot of time in Berkeley hanging out with the editor of *The Berkeley Barb* and watching the "hip" scene there. I was Mr Jones... I didn't know what it was, but I knew something was happening!

Then I went to the Avalon to hear the Jefferson Airplane and went back for the Grateful Dead. Then I started putting up posters for the Avalon, and started working the concessions. I would work the night office and the day office. I was paying the bands – I was interacting with the musicians on that level. Plus, Bob Cohen, who was Chet Helms' partner in the Family Dog, had set up this sound system. I used to help him put up the microphones because I thought it was interesting. I was recording stuff because it interested me. It was more along my kind of thinking: mechanical, mathematical. My brain just works that way.

That was intriguing for me and I got more involved in that. I went on to learn more about recording with Bob Matthews. He was an equipment guy and then got more involved with sound and we were experimenting with that. We were related to Owsley and his experimental... everything. My first interaction with Owsley was as the LSD guy and then he got into the sound stuff more and more. When he got an idea he went for it, which meant he was very late with everything. He could be a little over-focused sometimes when it came to making something happen, but he came up with great ideas.


"Jerry and I were good buddies": Garcia in the studio in 1974

"JERRY ALWAYS TRUSTED ME – I WAS WHO HE WOULD CALL FOR HIS STUFF"

He gave me my nickname "Bett-ar" because I would go around saying, "I just want to make that a little bit better..." I was the first female recording engineer and because of that you don't have any credibility. You have to manifest that. Jerry always trusted me – I was who he would call for his stuff. There was still that thing – I couldn't speak for myself monetarily but they trusted me to do the broadcast. They had Candace [Brightman] doing lights because of her artistry. As females we have to demonstrate the final product.

I gotta say I like live more. In the studio it's "work it, work it". I put together the Front Street studio for Jerry for [*Garcia solo album*] *Cats Under The Stars* (1978). We went in to rehearse and record at studios in the city and Ron Tutt, who was Elvis's drummer, liked his drum sound so well, he said, "Why don't we do it here?" And Jerry said, "Ah, Bett-ar, you can have the 16-track machines here for tomorrow, right?" "Ahh, sure, no problem..." Jerry and I were good buddies. He'd come over to my house and have a cappuccino and listen to the tapes that we'd done the previous night and hang. We'd go somewhere for a drive and we'd interact. He knew he could call me and I'd put something together for him.

I learned a lot from Bob Matthews. He was a lot more technical than me. Learning to be an engineer – a lot of it was observation for me. I would see what was being changed physically and hear what changes in the sound. I'm not a technician on that level. I'm an ear. It's really what I hear in the end; I don't care how you got there. I look for the purest and the clearest reproduction of the music. I consider it capturing the music as opposed to recording it. I want it to be exactly as the musicians wanted it to be in that moment and put it in a space that it envelops you. I can get there – sometimes! The better the band plays, the better my sound. ●

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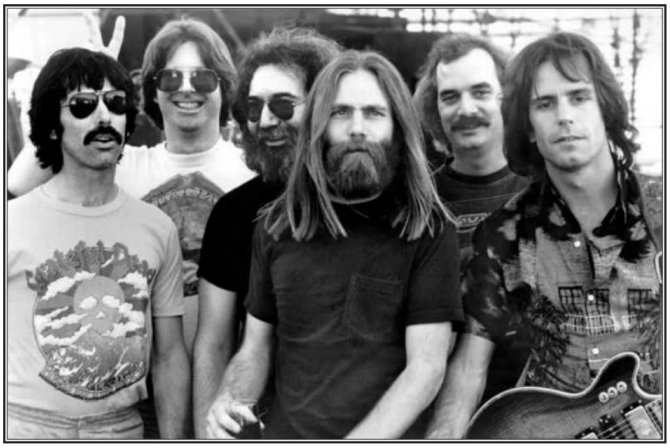
GRATEFUL DEAD

Built to last! Presenting the *Ultimate Music Guide* to one of the world's pioneering and historic bands. From their days at the dawn of expanded consciousness with Ken Kesey's "acid tests" all the way to their huge hit, "Touch Of Grey". What a long strange trip it's been…



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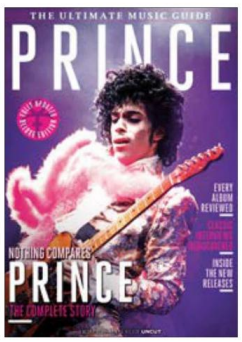
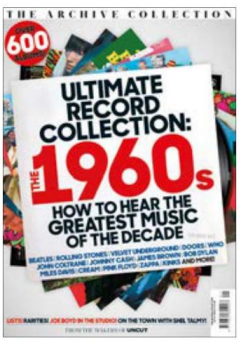
In our exclusive intro, Bob Weir looks to the past (and future) of Grateful Dead music

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